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"'Yes, you have seen me unveiled, Dog,' she said."

From "THE WOMAN IN THE VEIL."

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THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

Brethren of the Beach

by H. D. Couzens.

THIS heading will appear in the next number of ADVENTURE, and under it will run one of the best stories that ADVENTURE has ever published. You are already familiar with Mr. Couzens's work, and know that what is printed under his name is worth reading.

It is an easy thing to cram a story full of action, battle, murder and sudden death. Any cheap dime-novel can do that for you. But it is quite another matter to cram it full of action from start to finish and yet keep it entirely out of the dime-novel class and make it the kind of story you would have to read even if there weren't any action in it, simply because it is so well written. With characters that are real people and that act just as you would expect those people to act in real life. Scenes so vividly described in a few words that they live before your eyes.

In a word, it offers just what ADVENTURE stands for—quality as well as quantity and strength. A man's story, and yet the women will like it, for there are two strong love-interests underlying it all. A novelette, complete in the June ADVENTURE. Watch for it.

And you'll like the other stories in that number.

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Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, Managing Editor

Vol. IV. ADVENTURE No. I.

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"PRACTICALLY all the scenes in that story—all those with muscle in them—were only slightly altered accounts of what happened to me in the first few months of my stay in the Pen," writes Dr. John I. Cochrane in response to my letter asking what real facts were behind his three stories that have appeared in ADVENTURE—"The Crook and the Doctor," "Cupid and the Crook," and, in this issue, "The Open Night." He is referring particularly to the first of these.

"My attempts to clean up the service, to give the really sick men decent treatment, at first stirred up trouble just about as stated. Also, 'Sled Wheeler' helped me out in just the brisk and arbitrary manner described—he smashed my arch-enemy with a heavy water-bottle; then carved him up with the pieces, 'Just to get a quick decision, and to put the rest of the gang hep.' It was an example that had its effect, and I had little trouble in carrying out my plans thereafter. But it was not until some time afterward that I found out how much the famous crook had really done for me on a dozen different occasions.

"In fact he did most of the doing that was done. I did only what I started out to do—got the service straightened out and was rewarded by what I learned as well as by the devotion of the prisoners.

"The only lively scene in the story, that I now recall, that was much different in fact, was the scene in the maniac's cell. There wasn't any 'Kid Landon' present. The only persuasion applied to the wild man was the one punch I had to give him—or get my skull spattered. A 'screw' helped—strictly by advice, from outside the cell."

ALL of which was sufficiently surprising to me when I read it. I had known that Dr. Cochrane had been a physician on the Island, but had taken it for granted that his stories were merely the embroidery of imagination with the ordinary experiences of a prison doctor as foundation.

Even after learning the truth, I could not believe, when I first read "The Open Night," that the mysterious secret order so prominent in the tale was anything more than a large piece of fiction tacked on to Dr. Cochrane's real experiences. But I was to be surprised again. Just such a powerful secret order *does exist!*

I can only add that I have known about Dr. Cochrane for some time through other people, that he and I have become pretty well acquainted through a long correspondence, and that I have no reason to regard what he says as anything but a sincere statement of actual facts. These facts, as he gives them, are somewhat startling:

"YES, I did know Searing. And his name was ——. Also I did know Wheeler, as I have stated, and his monaker was —— ——, a gun of wide fame. I fear he has croaked, or the stories would have brought me news of him.

"That 'Secret Order' without name? You forget, I ween, that those temporarily of the Outer Circle were not put hep to the name, purpose or reality of its problematic existence. They—one of which I was whom—were temporarily under the orders and protection of they knew not what. That protection I certainly enjoyed, in the year 1899, and that is all I know. What I guess I would fain retain. It is a hard fact that with 'Sled's' help I got the Head Matron bounced. It is a harder fact—to explain—that in one and the same year I had convincing evidence that I was looked upon with favor by the retiring and the incoming Wardens, who were of opposing political camps and widely different standards of morals. Likewise it is literally true that I had but to tell any crook in the Pen to get on the operating-table, and he got—without academic distinctions of pathological indications—to have his head amputated if I saw fit. Selah!"

IT RATHER makes one "sit up and take notice," doesn't it, that secret order, probably still operating in our midst and possibly having an unseen hand in national and even international events?

Dr. Cochrane's stories have brought us a flood of enthusiastic returns. I imagine that this newest one, appearing in this number, will grip you even harder than the previous tales. And knowing that there is cold, hard fact behind them won't be likely to diminish your interest. Start "The Open Night" and see whether you can stop reading it.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Adventure

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May 1912 Vol. 4 No. 1

The Call

by Peter B. Kyne

MY FRIEND, Sergeant John Ryan, B troop, 11th U. S. Cavalry, is an interesting individual covered with scars and medals and prickly heat. He has an old simitar cut on the top of his sinful head and a bayonet jab on the inside of his left thigh, trifling mementos of the Egyptian campaign of '84, when he was a bugler boy with the 21st Hussars. He has a campaign medal with the five bars from the British service, a silver star from the Khedive of Egypt, the campaign medal issued to the troops that served during the Spanish war and the Filipino Rebellion, a special medal of honor from Congress, and a slight sprinkling of malaria, which latter brought him home from the Islands last Spring.

I first met Sergeant Ryan on the Tartar wall at Peking, under the most extraordinary circumstances. He was a private in an infantry regiment at the time, and was surrounded by four Chinamen, each of whom entertained an earnest desire to puncture the tropic-tanned hide of John Ryan until it should resemble a sort of human colander.

I interfered (which I had no business to do, being a mere war correspondent and consequently a non-combatant) not because John Ryan needed my poor services, but because I had never seen prettier bayonet

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exercise anywhere, and I felt a great desire to make Private Ryan's acquaintance. At any rate it was my privilege to hold one Chinaman while John Ryan disposed of the other three, who for a minute had threatened, as Ryan expressed it later when the fighting was over, "to borrow his skin f'r a purrse."

And so I am honored with the friendship of John Ryan. Every two years or thereabouts he shows up. He comes breezing in on a transport from some fever hole in Mindanao, or a troop train brings him in from Fort Sam Houston, en route to take station at Jolo in the Sulu group, or Buzz-Buzz or Ilo-ilo. He is forever bound for some place with a double-jointed name. He never writes—bless his big, brave Irish heart! He calls—every two years.

John Ryan brings me strange things from the strange places where his martial vocation calls him. On one of his visits he brought me a silver-mounted tobacco-jar, fashioned from the skull of a Pulajane chieftain. My wife would like to put it in the cellar. The walls of my library are covered with Remington pistols, a Mauser carbine, barongs, bolos, a Malay kris, a Moro head-hunter's knife and various other implements designed to reduce the census. Once he smuggled in two cases of gaudily painted Chinaware from Yokohama, and presented it to my wife. Though she never dares to use it, she prizes it highly as a direct importation that never paid a cent of duty.

With all of these things that John Ryan has given me he brings a story, and upon the occasion of his last visit he presented me with a violin.

"At last," I thought, "John has brought me something that has not come into his possession by force of arms."

When he landed at the Presidio wharf I was waiting there to bring him home to dinner. It is a great privilege to have John Ryan to dinner, for when the coffee and cigars come on, he expands and tells me fantastic tales from the queer corners of the earth where the Adjutant-General sends him.

"I've a fiddle for ye," he announced, as he sank into my best leather-covered chair, stretched his puttee-covered legs toward the hearth and proceeded to load a villainous briar pipe. "No. *Gracias*. The divil fly away wit' your two-bit cigars. I'll have a whiff o' me Hinnery Clay if ye'll let me have a pinch of that mixthure ye smoke. Where in the name of patience is ould Datto Ali? It'd be like the skut to drop off the table and break to powdher. Come here to me, ye divil——"

He dipped his great brown hand into my gruesome tobacco-jar and filled his pipe with exasperating delay.

"I've a fiddle for ye," he repeated, "a fiddle for ye with a Dago name and a tone like the sob of an angel. She's there foreninst ye, in that little Japanee basket I brought up wit' me. Unpack it and give us a tune. Arrah, but Jawn Povolsky could draw the heart out of ye wit' that fiddle! Poor little Jawn! He's dead now, th' Lord 'a' mercy on him!"

I unstrapped the little lacquered basket —the kind you buy on the Bund at Yokohama for a yen, and drew out the instrument. It was carefully wrapped in a piece of red flannel. John Ryan grinned.

"'Tis a belly bandage it's wrapped in," he said. "They issued thim to the throops in the early part of the Filipino campaign. The Ould Ladies' Auxiliary F'r the Previntion of Cholery Morbus made thim f'r the boys to sthrap around their middle. We used thim f'r gun-wipes, and Jawn Povolsky made a fiddle-case of his and mine."

"Who was John Povolsky?" I inquired, as I unwound the flannel covering.

"Jawn Povolsky," said Sergeant Ryan, "was the ——est finest fiddler Gawd A'mighty ever created. He played the piccolo in our regimental band and he was a fine, decent little man when sober."

THE violin was small—a three-quarter, very black, and with the varnish well worn off. I drew the bow slowly over the strings and a strain of exquisite melody filled the room. Instantly I lowered the instrument and held it up to the light for a peek inside.

"What did you say it was?" I demanded eagerly. "What kind of a violin is it?"

"I didn't say," replied John Ryan. "'Tis a Dago name, I'm afther telling ye. Jawn Povolsky towld me the name the day he bought it, but I was never a hand at rememberin' such things. 'Tis named afther a cigar. What's this it is now? Sure I know the name well enough. 'Tis a—sure I know it. Of coorse I know it. 'Tis a Cremo!"

"A Cremona, you sacrilegious old dog,

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you! Do you mean to tell me this violin is a Cremona?"

"Faith I do," murmured John Ryan placidly; "just that same. Sure, Jawn Povolsky thought more of that fiddle than he did of the *mestizo* woman he married, and a fine, sthrapping slip of a girrl she was. That fiddle was all that kept him alive as long as he was. He'd sit up in bed and tuck that ould fiddle under his chin, with the head of it grinnin' at him, and I'd swear ye'd think the man was *poco loco*. He willed it to me when he died, and made me promise I'd never sell it unless to a man that could appreciate it. But what do I want with a fiddle? I can't play it no more than the man in the moon, so I give it to you who can. Can ye play 'Garryowen'?"

"John," I protested, striving to be honest, "do you know the value of this violin, if it's genuine? It's worth thousands of dollars."

"Thousands of dollars Mex!" snapped John Ryan contemptuously. "Sure, ye talk f'r all the wide wurrld like Jawn Povolsky. Do ye mane to look a gift horse in the mouth? Take it, ye gossoon, and give us a bit of a tune. D'ye think I don't know the price of a fiddle? Sure, I bought one wanst on the Escolta to give to the *muchacho* that did me wash. Four *pesos* I paid for it, and a divilish fine fiddle 'twas."

"But, John, don't you know that Cremona violins are as scarce as hair on a lizard? There are men who'd commit murder—steal, for a prize like this!"

"Sure, don't I know? A Portugee man stole it in Hong-Kong and I took him across me knee f'r doin' it. 'Twill be a long time agin before he steals another fiddle."

"But, John——"

"Will ye shut up? D'ye want me to break that fiddle over the head of the first *hombre* that does me wash in Jolo and comes back wit' me best fatigue pants pressed the wrong way? What should I be doin' wit' a fiddle in me haversack, thraipsin' back to foreign service? Sure, ye're crazy!"

It was useless to argue with John Ryan. He is Irish and will have his way. So I drew the ancient instrument up to my chin and softly played "Killarney." John's bold black eyes were bright with a suspicious moisture when I finished, for calloused indeed is the exile whose heart will not soften at that call to Erin.

"I'm paid," he said. There was a reminiscent look in his eyes. "Now play the 'Serenade'—Schubert's 'Serenade'."

"What do you know about Schubert's 'Serenade'?" I asked, surprised. "I thought you wanted jigs and reels."

John Ryan reached for the skull of Datto Ali and refilled his pipe. At last the story was coming:

IT MAKES me think of Jawn Povolsky and a night in the Shamrock and Thistle, in Hong-Kong. And there was a woman there, and Jawn Povolsky played the fiddle as never man played fiddle before, and drew her in to him from the middle of the Queen's Road—step by step, through the green swingin' doors of the Shamrock and Thistle and down between the tables, where even the drunken men sat quiet to see her come.

There was men there from the Royal Welsh Fusileers and the United States army, Russians, Germans, Frenchmen and Eyetalians from the cruisers in the roadstead, and a big, black-whiskered Sikh policeman standing by the door. And one and all they watched her, with never a whisper among them, until she reached Jawn Povolsky and took him to her heart, where he belonged, him and his fiddle. And of all the wild lads in the place that night, I was the only wan that knew and undherstood, and I was sorry for Jawn.

The Shamrock and Thistle is not, as ye might suppose, the campin'-grounds of the Irish and Scotch. 'Tis small sense they showed in findin' a name. 'Twas a public-house—what they call in the ould counthry a pub, and being in the Queen's Road, 'twas frequented be men from all over the wurrld, and run be a Jew. A fine place it was, be the same token, where a man could buy a scuttle of half-and-half, dhrink what he wanted and pass the balance along to his frinds, and all for the matther of a *peseta*.

Me and Jawn Povolky touched at Hong-Kong on our way home in September of '99. We was both discharged regulars, wit' quarthermaster's transportation home along with a ramping lot of volunteers aboord the *Tartar*, a dirrty divil of a boat, a C. P. liner chartered be our Governmint to get the *voluntarios* home in time to vote. She'd a leaky tube, or forty of them f'r that matther, and we put into Hong-Kong for to go on dry dock.

We were the first of Uncle Sam's dough-

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boys to ever sthrike Hong-Kong, and naturally a bit of a curiosity to the British. The British—bad 'cess to thim!—own Hong-Kong, body and bones, including the Chinamen. Still and all it's a nice place to spind a night or two and thin be off. We stayed there nine mortal days.

The anchors hadn't dropped till I was shlippin' down a rope and makin' for the stone quay in a sampan. Safe ashore, I picked me out a fine, sthrappin' rickshaw coolie and bade the slave to take me to the nearest English-speakin' saloon. Clarence Hancock was tindin' bar at the Hong-Kong Hotel and I wint no further.

If ever I met a gintleman, 'twas Clarence. Troth, he was a fine young man! Be one o'clock I had him as drunk as a priest at a weddin', and the two of us climbs into a sampan and puts off f'r the transport. I'd forgotten something. That something was Jawn Povolsky, and I'd left him in a poker game on the hurricane deck. Three things Jawn loved—poker, liquor and that dirty ould fiddle I just give ye. He was fair fond of his *mestizo* woman, though no man takes a native wife into account when he's ordered home.

What manner of man was Jawn Povolsky? Sure, he was life size, wit' big black eyes that looked like smoke had got into them. He'd a head like a colonel of cavalry and a tuft of black hair that sthuck up like a bandmaster's chako. A thrifle weak in the chin, like a girrl, but a fine lad in spite of it.

As I say, I'd left Jawn in a poker game. 'Tis little he cared for Hong-Kong or the delights of a life ashore while the inimy had a cint to spare. Me and Clarence Hancock clumb aboord and there wasn't a soul on deck except the Chino crew coaling from a lighter alongside. So down we go into the hold, and no sooner are we down than I hear Jawn Povolsky playin' his fiddle, and be the tune he was playing I knew him to be down in the mouth. A sad boy he was, in some ways, like a man who's mixed deep in trouble and can't forget, and whin he played "Traumerei"—is there a tune called that?—'twas a sure sign his heart wasn't in the service.

Down below decks 'twas as dark as the 24th Infantry, and Gawd knows they're naygurs.

"Jawn," says I, "quit yer fiddlin' and come out of that."

Clarence Hancock hits me a swipe on the lug, and sez he, "Will ye shut up?" sez he, as fierce as a weasel; "will ye shut up? Man alive! 'Tis 'Traumerei' he's playing."

"Arrah, go wan," sez I. "Sure——"

"—— ye," says Clarence with tears in his eyes, "I paid ten dollars to hear a wurrld-beater wanst in New York City, and I'll stake me immortal sowl he took lessons from yer frind Jawn!"

"What are ye givin' us?" says I. "Sure Jawn's a Chicago Polock wit' a horrible thirrst. He don't begin to play till afther the eighth drink. Afther that he's a —— fine fiddler and I'll bar none."

"John Ryan," says Clarence, "this Jawn Povolsky, settin' back there in the dark hold of this stinkin' transport playin' 'Traumerei' is not a fiddler. Don't slander the man. He's a master—no less. Have be till he's through playing."

"Divil a hair," says I, for the drink was takin' possession of me. "Come out of that, Jawn, and meet me frind, Clarence Hancock."

So Jawn put up his fiddle and come up on deck and was introjuced to him.

"Jawn," says Clarence as soon as he'd shook hands, "I'd like if ye'd come ashore with us and bring yer fiddle. We'll go up to the Shamrock and Thistle and meet some men, and ye shall play 'Traumerei.' I mintion the Shamrock and Thistle because in all the wurrld to-night ye can not find a finer crowd of rough men, and I'm minded to see ye bring their sowls into their eyes. Also there is, in the orchestra, a young Portugee man, and as a violinist he's conceded to be the best in Asia. Also again, he's fair conceited over his playin' and 'twould be a nice thing to aise him down a thrifle. We'll make a bet that Jawn Povolsky makes a man cry wit' his playin', which no Portugee ever did."

"I'm very lonesome," says Jawn Povolsky, "and a little relaxation is what I need. I'll get me fiddle and come."

II

WELL, sir, an hour later we were ashore, and that night, when the crowd was at its noisiest, me and Jawn Povolsky and Clarence Hancock, a bit the worse for wear and tear, comes into the Shamrock and Thistle, sits down at a table near the orchestra and orders a mug

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of ale. While it was being drawn, Clarence got into conversation with the Portugee man about his playin', and the first I knew of it, Jawn Povolsky was leanin' across the table and shakin' a hundred dollars in American gold under the man's nose. It appears that the Portugee man had made the brag that he was the finest fiddler in all Asia, to which, of coorse, Jawn Povolsky does not agree.

"You will never be the greatest violinist in Asia," says Jawn Povolsky, "until I leave. While I'm here you're second best, but I'm the king. I'll lay ye this hundred dollars I can outplay ye and leave the verdict to this mob of rough men. Any tune ye like."

The Portugee man smiled, with his eyes on Jawn's gold.

"I'll get the boss to cover that," says he, very cheerful, "and the test shall be Schubert's 'Serenade'."

"Fire away," says Clarence, and Jawn smiled his queer, sad little smile. The boss covered the bet in a twinkling, and says Jawn Povolsky to me:

"Ye and Clarence may have the money," says he; "there's hell in me heart this night, and I'll play for love. D'ye hear me? I'll play for the love that wanst was mine, before I was a godless, piccolo-playing soldier musician! Do you have Clarence tell this wild crowd that I'll play to make a man cry, and to place their bets according, and divil —— the odds!"

"But can ye make a man cry, Jawn?" says I.

"I'll make wan man cry," says Jawn.

"Who may that be? Not John Ryan," says I.

"The Portugee man will cry," says Jawn. "He's a musician. Have Clarence take a few bets, and we'll get out of Hong-Kong with money to burrn."

Clarence Hancock got up on a chair and talked to the crowd, drinkin', roaring, laughin', cursin' divils that they were, and all with their pay in their pockets. We had, between Clarence and me, two hundred dollars, most of it left over from me finals whin I left the service, and we laid it at odds of ten to one that Jawn Povolsky was the betther fiddler and twinty to one that at least wan man would cry. 'Twas a darin' thing to do, but Clarence and Jawn was as calm as two ducks in a typhoon.

The Portugee man played first, and upon me word I felt a cold in me gills, for he was not a bad player at all, at all. But whin Jawn Povolsky stood up with that ould fiddle under his arm, and let his drunken, big sad eyes rove over that crowd, ye could hear a pin drop.

Far gone in liquor he was, or he'd never have faced the crowd. He was a modest man, was Jawn. For a half minute he looked them over, smiling a bit, and his eyes did a left oblique over to where a little knot of the Royal Welsh were sitting along the wall. The Royal Welsh were all Irish, and in a flash I knew what Jawn Povolsky was up to.

He tucked his fiddle under his chin, looked them all over once more and stharted to play "Killarney." He didn't play it. Man dear, he sobbed it! And when he was finished he played "The Minstrel Boy," and the sound of it was like tears at a wake. He was a divil! That Jawn Povolsky took your sowl, tied it up in catgut and carried it away with him wherever he would. Russian, German, French, Italian—every man Jack of them heard the tunes of his own dear land, and they forgot they'd ever heard the Portugee man. And when Jawn Povolsky had played his divil's trick on us all, and had our sowls as weak as white wine, he played Schubert's "Serenade," which was to be the test.

For a full ten seconds after he finished, 'twas as still as the grave. Thin, wit' one hand Jawn Povolsky reached out, took the Portugee man's money and handed it back to him. 'Twas all done before we knew, and Jawn Povolsky had his fiddle up to his chin, playing "Traumerei," and a little French gunner's mate took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, while the Portugee man leaked like a sieve.

I'm not a judge of music, sir. All music is good to the Irish and Irish music is best of all, but while I live I'll not forget that night in the Shamrock and Thistle. Sure, all I could know was that an angel was crying, and little be little Jawn Povolsky seemed to grow until wit' a toss of his hair and a flash of his eye he quit foolin' and commenced to play! Play, man? It wasn't playing. It was something that can only come out of a man's heart, and I could have sworn that Jawn Povolsky was callin' on some one to come. His eyes was closed, and his body swayed a little, with drink perhaps, while he laid his cheek to his fiddle and called and pleaded. And by and

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by the green doors swung open and the woman come in!

EXCEPT for the pleading and sobbing of Jawn Povolsky's fiddle, there was silence that big ye could hear it. I didn't see the woman come in, but I did see Jawn Povolsky's eyes open, stare a minute, and close agin, for all the wurrld like a man that's hit through the stomach and knows it's the finish for him. I followed his glance, and there, wan hand howlding the swinging door and the other on her heart, she stood. I could look past her out into the Queen's Road and there was a fine private rickshaw and two liveried coolies sthandin' by; and thin I knew she was no common woman.

For the space of a minute she sthood at the door, and sure a blind man could see that she thought she was alone wit' Jawn Povolsky. Then, slow, sthep be sthep, she came down the centher of that big roomful of drunken men, sthraight to Jawn, and as she come, the man opened his eyes and never took them from her; just kept on wit' that "Traumerei" tune in a way fit to tear yer heart out.

She was within six feet av him when he smiled at her—ah, a rare, good smile had poor Jawn Povolsky—and wit'out missin' a single note he commenced on wan of Moore's melodies, "Believe Me if All Thim Endearing Young Charms."

At that the woman let out a little blat of an "Ah!" Sthraight to Jawn Povolsky she wint, and the music sthopped whin her arrm wint around him and she pulled his head down to her and kissed him fair on the lips!

Ah, but she was a jewel of a woman; no longer young, but blooming with maturity and the things a woman feels whin her head is filled with something besides nonsense. She said something to Jawn, and Clarence Hancock, being right back of Jawn, heard it.

"I heard ye callin', beloved!" says she. "Passin' in the sthreet I heard ye, darlint, and I knew 'twas you. Come ye now wit' me, for I've earrned the wages of fools, and the years have been long since I left ye."

Like a man walkin' in his sleep, Jawn Povolsky laid aside his ould fiddle, tuk the woman be the hand and passed out of the Shamrock and Thistle, out through thim green swingin' doors into the Queen's Road. Me and Clarence sthraggled afther, just in time to see the woman climb into her own rickshaw and a coolie throtting up wit' another for the convaynience of Jawn Povolsky. He clumb in, and side be side they wint down the sthreet, leaving me and Clarence lookin' afther thim like a pair of gummocks.

"By Gawd!" says Clarence Hancock; and that was all he could say for the space of five minutes.

We were that upset we had to go back into the Shamrock and Thistle for another drink, and there, be the edge of the wall, the Irish from the Royal Welsh were lined up be a big sergeant wit' their hands in the air, swearin' to something. It was long before I found out what it was. That woman was wife to a major in the Royal Welsh, and they were for keepin' her name clane, for the sake of the major.

Clarence and me took our money from the sthake-howlder and give it back to the min we'd won it from, and 'twas days afther before I thought me that divil a decision did the crowd render. Jawn Povolsky's fiddle was lyin' on the table, and I took it undher me arrm and walked out wit' Clarence.

I'D ENGAGED a room at the Hong-Kong hotel, and the minute me and Clarence got there I wint to bed. Two hours later I hearrd a knock on me door, and whin I opened it there sthood Jawn Povolsky.

"Man," sez he, "have ye got it—have ye got it?"

"Divil a bit," sez I. "'Tis you that has it. What do ye mane?"

"My fiddle," sez he. "I forgot everything, even that, and I left it behind!"

"Lave be," sez I. "There's yer ould fiddle, safe and sound."

He give a sort of half sob and pounced on it, and if I ever hearrd the cry of death, 'twas whin Jawn faced around and looked at me.

"'Tis not the wan!" sez he. "That Portugee man—he's traded fiddles——"

He sat down on the foot of me bed and stharted to cry. As for me, while ye'd be adjusting a sight for a thousand yards, I was into me clothes, clattherin' down-stairs and howlin' for a rickshaw. Two minutes later I was poundin' up the Queen's Road

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headed back for the Shamrock and Thistle. At the door I met that Portugee man coming out, and faith! 'twas many a day thereafter before he was fit to play the fiddle. I smashed his own over his thievin' head and took back Jawn Povolsky's.

I've a notion that, afther all, the Portugee man was the savin' of Jawn Povolsky. If it hadn't been that he thought more of his fiddle than he did of her, she'd 'a' had him. But he left her to go back for the fiddle, and when he'd got the fiddle back I locked him in and divil a foot did he stirr until the madness had left him. There are some things, sir, that I will not sthand for, and whin a hard-dhrinkin', sad little dog of a Chicago Polock of a fiddler can't keep his own wife, 'tis small business he has wit' the wife of another, and him an officer and a gintleman.

Who was Jawn Povolsky? I don't know. Wanst he was somebody. As for the woman—Gawd knows! 'Tis impolite to ax questions. But, judgin' from what Clarence hearrd her tell Jawn Povolsky, it looks like wanst there was somethin' bechune thim, and she tossed him up and he fiddled her back into his heart. Gawd knows. I never saw her agin, and neither did Jawn. Perhaps she's waitin' yet for him to come back with his fiddle.

I kept a grip on him till the transport sailed, and whin our finals was gone we took on agin and went back to furrin service. Bein' ould campaigners we had our choice of station, and Jawn wint back to his *mestizo* wife. In the ind he died of blood-poison from a brass bullet, and he left me that ould fiddle, that cost him two *pesos* in a Chino junkshop in the Calle San Rosario.

'Tis a queer, queer wurrld, afther all!

Tex Wilding's Evil Past

by Alfred Rossiter

TEX WILDING waved a smiling farewell to Messrs. Gulling & Vanderbilk, also to his entire roll of three thousand dollars, and passed jauntily from the brokers' offices into the swirl of Broad Street. Once outside, however, his careless smile faded and he ripped out a string of profanity that would have floored a Chatham Square roughneck.

"I ain't kickin' on droppin' my stake on a gamble," he grumbled; "that's all right. But what gits me is that I didn't hold out enough for car-fare home!" He pushed back his orthodox Stetson and contemplatively scratched his head. "Guess I'll have to ride the bumpers back to Perrins' Gulch." In-

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stantly, however, his good-humor cropped out again. "Holy Jerusalem, won't the bunch be tickled!" he grinned quizzically.

He leisurely rolled himself a cigarette and strolled over to watch the turmoil of the Curb Stock Market just below the corner of Broad and Exchange Place. After a while the lunch crowds began to pour into the thoroughfare, thronging the sidewalks and overflowing into the street. The Westerner turned from the gesticulating hodge-podge of brokers and gave his attention to the passers-by.

Suddenly he dived headlong into the crowd, in pursuit of a slim girl who had just gone past, furtively dabbing a handkerchief at her eyes. It was Gulling & Vanderbilk's pretty stenographer, whom Wilding had courted with respectful ardor from the very beginning of his short but disastrous connection with the firm.

"Why, Miss Devlin, what *is* the trouble?"

The girl turned quickly and, seeing Tex, hat in hand, gazing down at her with evident concern in his straightforward gray eyes, made a brave attempt to smile. But she failed dismally and with a renewed flood of tears, she burst out: "Oh, Mr. Wilding, I'm so glad to see you! Maybe you can do something to those horrid men!"

For a moment Wilding stared. The impulsive greeting from this hitherto reserved young woman astonished him.

"Why, Miss Devlin, if any ornery cuss has been insultin' you, you just bet I kin do something!"

Observing the curious glances directed at the agitated girl, he took her by the elbow and piloted her into a near-by restaurant. Overawed by the matter-of-fact air with which he took charge of the situation, she went without protest. Wilding found a quiet table and beckoned imperiously to the waiter. He'd show this girl that Texans know how to treat a lady.

"Bring us some oyster stew, canned salmon, baked beans, pumpkin pie and plenty ice-cream," he commanded.

The waiter stared at him incredulously for a minute, realized suddenly that it was not a joke, and rushed off to hide a cavernous grin. Mary Devlin, who had meanwhile mastered her tears, was too tactful to show even the suspicion of a smile. Tex leaned forward comfortably on the table.

"Now while we're waitin' for the grub, suppose you tell me who got funny."

The girl shook her head. "Oh, it's nothing like that! But I just found out that I've been working in a bucket-shop. Overheard a conversation between Vanderbilk and his partner. And what's more, they cheated you out of your money by delaying quotations. When they told you that your three thousand was gone, you had really made a thousand dollars, so that they've actually robbed you of four thousand."

She stopped, evidently expecting an outburst from Wilding. Violence, however, was far from that gentleman's mind. He was picturing to himself what an easy mark she must consider him. So he flushed to the very roots of his brown hair and then he said softly:

"Mother of Moses, ain't I the prize sucker!"

"Indeed you're not! Why, I've been working there for a month and never noticed anything wrong."

He regained some of his jauntiness. "Do they know that you're on?"

Mary's blue eyes opened in hurt surprise. "Of course they do! And I told them what I think of them, too! They offered to double my salary, but I just put on my hat and left."

"You ought to be from Texas!" Wilding could think of no greater compliment. Presently, however, his pleasant face grew serious. "Got any folks?"

"Just a little brother."

"Gee——" He stopped short, suddenly remembering that all he had in the world was about three dollars, most of which would go in payment for the lunch, so that, before he could offer to help this plucky young woman who was out of a job, he would have to recover his "roll." He turned to the girl, who was gamely wrestling with the huge mountain of beans which he had heaped up on her plate. "Now don't you go worryin' about findin' a job. Once I've settled with this here four-flushin' outfit, we'll git you fixed up quicker'n greased lightnin'."

Mary said nothing, but her eyes spoke for her. It was a novel and wonderful experience to meet a man who was plainly sincere in his willingness to help. He had looked so disappointed at her failure to eat more than one cut of pie, that she determined to do away with her titanic portion of ice-cream regardless of consequences.

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FOR a while they were silent. Then the girl ventured timidly: "I do hope that you'll do nothing reckless, Mr. Wilding. It's different from out West, you know."

Tex felt ridiculously pleased at her interest:

"I ain't keen on gettin' mixed up any with the police up here, so you needn't worry about my shootin' up the place. Anyhow, I never did believe much in totin' a gun."

"But didn't you—didn't you *kill* a man in Perrins' Gulch?" she asked, a little breathlessly. Again her companion flushed deeply. "Oh, *that*—that was different. But how in Sam Hill do you know about it?" He frowned vexedly.

"Gulling mentioned it to Vanderbilk. Said he'd heard it from a mining man who'd been down that way, and that he for one didn't want to be around if you should ever find out how they had stung you." She paused thoughtfully. "Wasn't it lucky, though, that you stopped me on the street? No one in the office knew your address and I wondered how I could ever let you know what they had done."

"I'm sure glad I did meet up with you," grinned Tex. He paid the check and tipped the waiter as if he had a purse full of gold. "I'll tell you what we'll do. Maybe I'll have some trouble corralling these here mavericks, so I'd better allow myself an hour and a half to get my stake back. Suppose we meet at three o'clock in front of the Stock Exchange right above here. Then I kin tell you how I made out, and we kin see about findin' you a nice job."

This agreed upon, and fortified with the girl's good wishes, he swept off his hat in a grand salute and stalked away to square accounts with the firm of Gulling & Vanderbilk.

There was no use wasting time by asking for his money. They'd simply tell him that he was mistaken and before he could take legal steps they'd vamose, cash and all. Walking up the street, Tex turned the situation over in his mind. So they knew that he had killed a man down home! He wasn't keen about having the fact advertised, but in this instance it might prove of advantage. Turning west he reached Broadway and took a car to City Hall. Crossing the Square hurriedly, he walked to a pawn-shop on upper Park Row. With a parting glance at his gold watch, he passed under the cluster of gilded spheres.

Twenty minutes later Tex pushed his way into the inside office of Messrs. Gulling & Vanderbilk and backed up against the door. His Stetson was cocked over one ear at a rakish angle, his eye had a steely glint, his jaw was set ferociously—and across his forearm rested a double-barreled shotgun. With military precision the two clerks ducked under their desks. In a corner of the room, right in line with the carelessly held gun, shivered and jabbered little, fat Gulling and tall, cadaverous Vanderbilk. Like a silent Nemesis stood the weather-beaten Texan at the door. Painfully conscious of his bloody record, the partners squirmed in eelish competition for the inner angle of the cruelly inelastic corner. Finally Vanderbilk, propping himself weakly against the wall, managed to quaver in a terrified whisper: "W-W-What d-does this m-mean?"

For a long minute the man with the gun regarded the palpitating broker with a look of mortal hate. Occasionally the gun twitched a bit and the palsied pair jumped in unison. At last Tex spoke:

"I know all you done!"

A groan from Vanderbilk, a stifled sob from Gulling, and the two sharpers collapsed limply on each other's necks. The clerks, finding themselves unmolested, now peeked grinning from their shelters. The partners, huddled in their corner, were whispering frantically, now and then glancing nervously at the scowling Westerner and mopping their foreheads. From outside came the shouting and hooting of the Curb brokers stirred by some flurry in the market.

Presently Wilding stamped his foot impatiently and repeated: "I know all you done!" At the same time he took a step forward. The trembling twain stretched forth imploring hands. "We'll pay! We'll pay!" they bleated in frantic chorus. Gulling turned to one of the clerks. "Make out a check for three thousand for Mr. Wilding."

The Texan laughed—a sardonic, soul-chilling laugh—and shifted his gun. Gulling took the hint with commendable promptness. "Never mind, Wilson." Keeping a wary eye on the weapon, he sidled to the safe and began to turn the combination. Tex backed once more against the

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door. The muzzle of the gun swung playfully to and fro between the corner and the safe. The little fat broker pulled open the heavy steel door. He counted out three thousand dollars and handed the bills to the silent gun-man. The latter crammed the roll into his pocket and thundered for a third time:

"I know *all* you done!"

With a gesture of utter despair, Gulling dived again into the safe and brought out another thousand. Wilding pocketed it and with one final glare of pent-up fury, wheeled and slammed out of the office.

With his gun still under his arm he sauntered slowly up Broad Street. But before he had gone a block he heard behind him a wild halloo and the rush of many feet. He grinned cheerfully and went right ahead. In front of the Stock Exchange the pursuit caught up with him. There were Gulling and Vanderbilk, still rather sickish as to complexion, the two clerks, the policeman who patrols the Curb market, a detective who happened along and the usual crowd of volunteers. The officer seized Tex, while the detective took the gun from his unresisting hands. The ingenuous captive gazed at them in mild surprise.

"What's the trouble, boys?" he demanded.

"These gentlemen say that you held them up with that gun."

Wilding laughed good-naturedly. "Look it over."

The detective opened the breach. It was not loaded. "That's an old dodge! We'll find the shells in the gutter," he prophesied skeptically.

"Suppose you did? The gun ain't got no hammers, no firin'-pin and no trigger. Some weapon, that! I'm goin' to give it to a kid for a present. And I ain't held up nobody. These here rustlers buncoed me out of four thousand dollars. Their young lady typewriter heard them talk about it and told me. I went to their ranch and said, 'I know all you done,'—and they got cold feet and handed me back my cash. I never even asked 'em for it. You ask these here young fellows if that ain't the gospel truth."

The detective turned inquiringly to the clerks. They came forward, fully conscious of their momentary importance.

"Sure, that's just what he done," they affirmed.

The brokers, who had seen Mary pushing through the crowd to stand by Tex, should he need her testimony, were trying to slink away, when the officer spotted them. "Well, do youse guys make a charge?" he demanded roughly.

"No. We'll—er—drop the matter!"

"Ye will, eh? Well, I'll report youse to the district attorney. He's looking fur just such birrds like youse!" He charged fiercely at the crowd which scattered before him. Then he came back to Wilding. "It's a good job ye done, young fellow, and it's dom glad I am ye got back yer dough. Good luck to yez!" And he returned to his beat. The detective had gone already.

Tex turned to Mary and took her arm with an air of proprietorship. "It's all your fault that I ain't in the freight-yards now, lookin' for a soft truck to ride home on!" he assured her gratefully. Then he went on hurriedly: "Now as to your job! My mother's son needs some one just like you, Miss Mary, to keep him out of trouble. And as for that kid brother you're raisin', well, there ain't no finer place than Texas for bringin' up boys!" He had spoken confidently, but his voice shook a little as he added: "What do you say, Miss Mary?"

The girl met his gaze squarely. "We've known each other a very short time, Mr. Wilding, but I sort of feel that you are a real man. I—I—well, I might think about this, if you will first tell me something." She paused, questioningly.

"I'll answer anything you want to know," said Tex hoarsely.

There was a certain dread in her eyes when she spoke. "Please, please don't be offended, but—you Westerners are often so—so heedless of human life—and—I feel very strongly on the subject. About that—that man you—killed? Why—why did you shoot him?" Mary waited breathlessly for his answer.

Tex shifted his feet uneasily. "Say, *must* you know?"

Mary nodded. "It means everything," she said solemnly.

"Well, if you must know—it happened years ago in Houston. I was drivin' a grocery wagon and I ran over a drunk in the dark!"

"Oh!"

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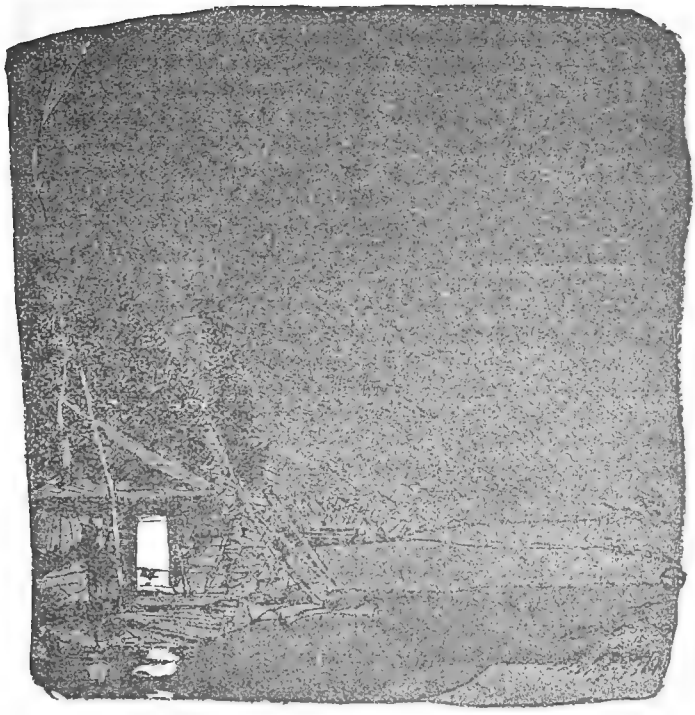

by Nevil G. Henshaw

The Revenge of Davide

AS OUR boat swung into the last reach of the Bayou Portage, Le Bossu bore hard down upon the left bank. Then, leaning his twisted body against the tiller, and fumbling with his free hand amid the hunting paraphernalia at his feet, the little hunchback smiled up at me with the look of simple courtesy which, through the hardships of many an expedition, I had never known to desert him.

"A moment, m'sieu, if you will be so kind," said he. "We are approaching the camp of a friend to which I promised to bring some stores, upon my return to the bay."

The camp, when we reached it a moment later, proved only a rough, flimsy hut, gray and weather-beaten, and backed by the straight, monotonous line of the Louisiana sea-marsh. Upon the little landing at the bayou's edge two brown, grave-eyed men received Le Bossu's sack with a word of thanks. Then there came a question as to the probability of geese, a doubtful reply accompanied by the inevitable shrug of the shoulders, and we were out in the current again.

Le Bossu was strangely silent as we crossed the bar at the bayou's mouth, and it was not until we were well out in the open water that he finally turned to me with the inquiring gaze that was always the forerunner of a story.

REVENGE, that is a curious thing, is it not, m'sieu? Sometimes it is accomplished in one way, sometimes in another; but usually there is left at the end a feeling rather of emptiness than of satisfaction. Thus, as in the case of my friend Davide, one is apt to be far more contented with the desire than with the accomplishment.

But I will tell you the story, and then you will understand.

Davide was a hunter, a fisherman—a king of the wild. He was a young man, very tall and strong, and his heart was as warm

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and as generous as that of a child.

It was for that big, honest heart of his that all loved him, m'sieu. When he came into a camp or a settlement, all brown and ragged, his loud cheerful voice calling greetings from afar, it was like a burst of sunshine upon a day of rain.

"Here comes Davide!" every one would cry. "Now we will all have a good time."

Even the little children would shout their pleasure, running forward to meet him and clustering about him as though he were the father of them all. As I have said, he was a king of the wild.

Davide's home was in a little hut far out upon the edge of the sea-marsh, for, like most hunters, he loved his solitude. Here he dwelt alone, hunting, seining, always facing cheerfully the many dangers and duties of his calling. In the Winter he sold his game. In the Summer he sold his fish. Occasionally he sold fresh meat, taking it out to the fishing-camps in a little lugger with a brick-red sail.

Ah, that fresh meat! It was Davide's downfall.

NOW for you to understand, m'sieu, I must first explain to you the condition of this country at that time. In those days there were no fences as there are now. Straight out to the sea-marsh the prairies stretched away, level and unbroken, save for the small enclosures about the homes of the people who dwelt upon them. As for the stock of these people—for the most part it roamed *au large*.

Those were the free and careless days of the open prairie. Did a man find himself possessed of a herd of beeves, he kept up those for his use, and turned loose the rest, though always with a brand upon the flank. After this, should he need another animal, he would saddle his horse and cut it out from the straggling herds that continually wandered the prairies.

Thus, in time, many of these beeves became as wild as the beasts of the forest. Gathering into small herds, they would push far out into the depths of the sea-marsh, whence their owners seldom took the trouble to drive them.

So here it was that Davide occasionally procured fresh meat for the men of the fishing-camps. He saw no wrong in the matter. He sees none to this day. If, upon his hunting expeditions a huge, shaggy creature should go crashing away amid the tall marsh-grass, why should he not chance a shot at it as he did with the rest of the game? Also there was a good market for the hides in the villages of the mainland.

As for the owners of the beeves, they seldom made complaint, leaving Davide to go his way, until Gonor arrived.

Gonor came from a distant parish to take possession of a home which he had acquired through debt. He was a large man, very stout and red, and he was possessed of that calm, smiling stubbornness which drives one mad. Never did he cease his smile. In sadness, in anger, even in the heat of argument it was the same.

Yet for all this he was a man of some influence, for, with his coming, the old, careless life of his neighbors changed.

Gonor's fence of fine, pointed wires was the first to enclose the open prairie. The stock which he had acquired was the first to be driven in from the marshes. His was the first serious threat against the depredations of Davide.

Thus there was war between these two—a war in which the frank defiance of Davide was pitted against the calm, smiling stubbornness of Gonor.

Believe me, m'sieu, Davide was at heart an honest man and, had Gonor come to him in good, open anger to make his complaint, the matter would have been at an end. But who can bargain with an enemy upon whose lips there is ever a smile?

So Davide published his defiance, and of those beeves of Gonor that went into the sea-marsh, never a one came out again. As for Gonor, he only smiled the harder as he waited for his chance to come along.

And then one day, in a store at the cross-roads, it came. It was a hide that did the mischief, m'sieu, a fresh green hide with Gonor's brand, which, in a moment of forgetfulness, the storekeeper admitted he had bought from Davide.

Next morning Davide was arrested as he stepped from his hut at daybreak. He made no resistance, he did not even protest. He was like one in a daze.

What did he know of the law, m'sieu? All his life it had been his custom to settle his difficulties man to man.

That night Davide slept in a cell of the prison at Mouton. It was his first confinement, and it drove him mad. In the morning, when they came to lead him forth to

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his examination, he placed his back against the wall, refusing to move.

"I have no quarrel with you, my friends," said he to the guards as they came against him. "The trouble is between M'sieu Gonor and myself. Let him come to me and settle the difficulty like a man!"

After this he fought silently, making no outcry when he was finally overpowered. Thus, from the first, he created a bad impression, and this among the people at Mouton, where his better qualities were unknown.

The trial came on in the Spring of the year. Three days it lasted, and in all that time Davide spoke never a word. Perhaps he realized the hopelessness of his position, for from the very first there was never a chance for him.

True, he had his witnesses—big, honest hunters and fishermen, who cheerfully tramped the long miles from the sea-marsh to plead his cause—but they were of little avail. It was pitiful to see them, m'sieu, to hear the way in which their poor, simple words were distorted by the lawyers. In the end they became so confused that their testimony was little better than that of the other side.

II

SO DAVIDE was found guilty of cattle stealing and was sent to prison for five long years. They took him to Hope, the State plantation, for they feared that he would be unable to stand the confinement of the great prison at Baton Rouge.

Ah, m'sieu, they did not know! At Baton Rouge he might have lost his life. At Hope he lost his soul!

Think of what it meant for that proud king of the wild. The long, hot days in the cane-field, when he toiled at the hard, servile labor that he had always despised. The dark, bitter nights in the great sugar-house while the ducks flew unheeded upon the cold, salt winds of the sea-marsh. The abuse of the guards, the blows, the stripes, and the daily companionship of the negro criminals.

Is it to be wondered that Davide lost his soul, that his great, honest heart became as hard and as savage as that of a wild beast?

Yet he made a good prisoner, working carefully and patiently, striving always to earn his freedom in the shortest possible space of time. That was his one thought, his one hope—to be free!

Now you will suppose, m'sieu, that with his thought of freedom Davide had ever in mind a picture of the little hut upon the edge of the sea-marsh, but this was not the case. Through all the long months and years of his confinement there was but one vision before his eyes—the fat, red face of Gonor, with its ceaseless, stubborn smile!

Always it was before him, in his work, in his sleep, even in the few hours of recreation that were occasionally allowed the prisoners. And always as he gazed at it, Davide's heart would grow harder and more relentless.

"*Bien*," he would say to himself. "Wait until I am out again!"

In little more than four years Davide was free. They let him out through the gate of the stockade one Summer afternoon, and before daybreak the following morning he was back at his home upon the sea-marsh. The hunter who had been keeping the hut in his absence sprang forward to meet him with a cry of joy, only to shrink back in terror at the hard, fierce look in his savage eyes.

"That is all right," Davide assured him. "What of Gonor?"

And so, m'sieu, the hunter told Davide of that which had befallen his enemy. Gonor had been unfortunate. His crops had failed, his stock had died, he had been forced to sell his home. Then had come the fever and he had lost his wife, his children. Now he lived in a deserted cabin upon the edge of the near-by cypress swamp, where he toiled all day with ax and pirogue, striving vainly to support himself.

Ah, m'sieu, was not that punishment enough for any man? Should not one have felt only pity for an enemy upon whom such misfortune had fallen?

Yet Davide was not satisfied.

"There is still worse luck to come to him," said he grimly, when his companion had finished.

All that day Davide roamed impatiently about the hut as he waited for the hour of his revenge. There were no plans to make, no details to arrange. For more than four years the consideration of the matter had been his one pleasure.

That Gonor had moved away only served to make his arrangements the easier.

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He had planned to hide in the swamp after the accomplishment of his deed. Then, too, there would be no trouble now in his escape. A quick, silent rush into the darkness of the trees, and all would be over. Surely that was better than the long, dangerous ride across the prairies.

Also Davide had learned from the hunter that his enemy slept out each night before the cabin, on account of the heat and his shortness of breath. When Gonor came forth to take his rest—that would be the time. His great bulk should make an easy mark in the moonlight.

Late that afternoon Davide shouldered his gun and the provisions that were to keep him while in hiding.

"*Bien*," said he, when all was ready; "this day has been longer even than all of the four years."

"And will you not reconsider the matter?" begged his companion. "Surely Gonor has suffered enough already?"

But Davide only smiled.

"You do not know," he replied. "You should go out there—to Hope!"

III

SO DAVIDE bade the hunter farewell, and set out through the sunset for the scene of his revenge. Quickly, eagerly, he strode along in the dull, red glow, as cruel and as merciless as the savage beasts that were beginning to stir about him.

It was very dark and still when he finally reached the outer edge of the swamp and crept through the shadows to the farthest of the scattered trees. Carefully he peered out from the protection of its trunk to see if, with all his care, he had taken the wrong direction.

But no. All was as the hunter had said.

There was the path, the weed-grown clearing, the deserted cabin with its low, stunted huddle of china trees. Then, as his vision became clearer, Davide began to pick out the details—the open door, the lighted window, the sagging porch with its ragged blanket, which he knew must be the couch of his enemy.

It was a sight to touch one's heart, the misery to which Gonor had fallen, but Davide's heart was dead.

To him there was naught save that open door through which his enemy must pass when he came outside. Already he could see the fat, red face as he would view it for the last time along the barrel of his gun.

"*Dieu!*" said he to himself. "To think that Gonor has but one life to lose!"

So Davide slipped back behind his tree, and thought of those four long years as he waited for his enemy to appear. Slowly the big, round moon crept into the sky, flooding the clearing with its cold, white rays until each weed, each blade of grass, stood out as in the light of day. The watcher smiled as he patted the gun across his knees, for there could be no miss that night.

Then Gonor put out the light, while the sound of his footsteps came toward the door.

They were old, they were tired, those footsteps, yet never had Davide heard a more welcome sound. An instant he paused to control himself before he rose into position behind his tree.

Quickly he raised the gun to his shoulder. Noiselessly he drew back the hammer, muffling its click within the hollow of his hand. A vague, gray shape appeared in the doorway, and he covered it carefully, waiting for the moment when it would appear in the moonlight.

But Gonor did not come outside. Instead, he stood in the doorway gazing sadly about the clearing, his eyes resting for a moment upon each pitiful possession as though he were bidding it farewell. In one loose swung hand he held a small, dark object, and, as he raised it slowly, a moonbeam struck from it the glint of steel.

Then Davide understood and, with a shout, rushed forward, dropping his gun as he ran.

Perhaps it was that love of life which is the strongest passion of every one. Perhaps it was the horror which all healthy men must feel for such a deed. I do not know. But as Davide ran, his suffering, his revenge, everything was forgotten save his desire to reach his enemy before it was too late.

"Gonor! Gonor!" he cried, seizing the pistol at the very moment of its discharge. "Are you mad, man? Would you lose your soul?"

Yet Gonor was not to be turned from his purpose.

"Let me go!" he panted. "My life is my own. I have stood too much already. Take heed lest I carry you with me!"

Ah, but that was a struggle, m'sieu—there in the moonlight! Despite his age and his weight, Gonor fought with the strength

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of two men, striving in his desperation to turn the weapon both against Davide and himself. Once more the pistol exploded, and then, his arm furrowed by a bullet, Davide beat down his opponent and stood above him.

"*Dieu*, Gonor!" he cried, "your life is indeed mine, since I have received a wound in saving it. Do you not know me?"

Gonor lay very quiet now, the madness half gone from his eyes, his great chest heaving slowly in the long, bitter sobs of one whose spirit is broken.

"What matter who you are?" he gasped. "A moment after you are gone and it will make no difference. I have lived too long, I tell you. Why, I do not know."

"You have lived for me, Gonor; for my revenge!" replied Davide. "But a moment ago I had you covered from behind the big cypress. Look at me closely, Gonor, and you will see who I am."

So Gonor looked, m'sieu, and as he did so, the light of memory kindled in his eyes. Quickly he rose to his feet, despite his bruises, and stood with arms outstretched, a perfect target in the moonlight.

"*Bien*, Davide!" said he. "Go get your gun. See, I am ready. It will be the better way."

Yet Davide did not return to the cypress. Instead he seated himself upon a fallen trunk and buried his face in his hands, as he strove with the confusion of his mind.

"No, Gonor," said he at last. "I can not shoot you. I swore revenge, but what revenge is it to take your life at your own request? No, you must live and suffer, Gonor, even as I lived and suffered through the years of my imprisonment. Perhaps some day you will be happy again; you will smile as in the years gone by, and then, perhaps, I will take my revenge! I can not say. But of one thing rest assured. You shall not take your life. It is mine, and I shall see that you care for it to the end appointed for you!"

"And so you are a coward, Davide," sneered Gonor. "Then must you be with me always, my friend. A moment alone, and you will have failed. What else is there for an outcast such as I?"

But Davide shook his head.

"No, no, Gonor," said he. "That is not the talk of a man. Rather are you the coward. Out there upon the coast there are still birds for the hunter, skins for the trapper, fish for the fisherman. We will go there together, you and I, and then, perhaps, I shall find a way."

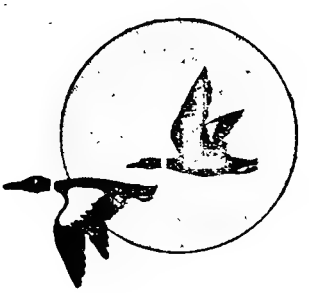
LE BOSSU paused to scan the marsh, for by now we had come within sight of our blinds at Drake Island.

"And then?" I inquired.

The little man shrugged vaguely.

"Who can say, m'sieu?" he replied. "You saw for yourself back there upon the Bayou Portage. The tall one was Davide, the other Gonor.

"Some say that they are like brothers; others that Davide is only waiting his time. I can not tell. Perhaps Davide has forgotten his revenge. Perhaps Gonor will return to his old, stubborn smile some day, bringing back to his companion the memory of those four long years at Hope. Who knows? It is in the hands of *Le bon Dieu!*"



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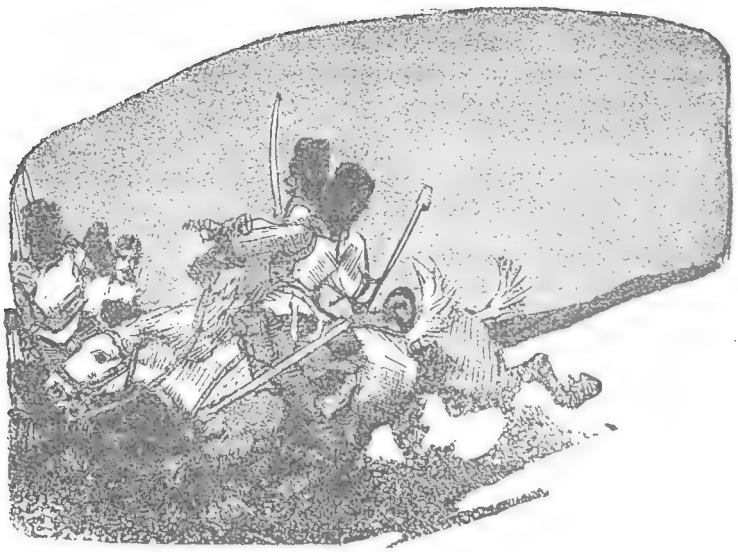

THE QUEEN — GOD BLESS HER!

by Talbot Mundy

We 'ave bought her the same with the sword and the flame,
An' we've salted it down with our bones.
(Poor beggars!—It's blue with our bones!)

IT WAS the month of February in the year of Grace, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, and for about the hundredth time in history, Merrie England was shouldering the burden of disaster. The frost-draped roads that led to Southsea and Plymouth Hoe rang with the tramp of regiments—bearded veterans, led by gray-haired officers.

There was set purpose written on the face of every soldier, and the crowds who lined the roads to watch them forgot to cheer; the excitement was too tense even for expression. Even the meanest among them knew that he was witnessing almost the most dramatic scene in England's history. Her old soldiers had rejoined the colors at the Queen's request, and were marching down in silence to the waiting troopships that would take them to a stricken battlefield. She had asked, and they were giving—to a man, promptly, willingly, and in deadly earnest—the only gift they had for her—their lives!

The early stages of the Crimean War were fought by seasoned troops; they were grown men who stormed the hill across the Alma and who charged up the heights of Inkerman, and they were nearly all grown men who dug the first trenches before Sevastopol. But the carnage was hideous; each battlefield was a blood-soaked shambles, and—worse by far than artillery-fire, or the hail of musketry, or Russian bayonet points—disease lurked in every sodden trench and rotten tent and leaky shelter-hut. Cholera claimed its toll of the finest regiments; dysentery followed in its wake; and then came Winter—the Russian Winter—and caught them unprepared.

The zero blasts that howl among the hills and valleys of the Crimea are dreaded by the Russians; even they suffered tortures in Sevastopol. But the British soldiers, ill-clad and scarcely sheltered at all and accustomed as they were to their milder, sea-warmed climate, perished as flies do in an Autumn frost. Long before the first Winter of the war had sped its course, the army at the front was decimated. And the army at the front chanced to be England's standing army, complete almost to the last man.

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The survivors hung on doggedly in the trenches answering the Russian bombs with shell and shrapnel; they were numb with cold, for their clothing was scant and ill-made; they were half-starved, for the food they had to eat was rotten—rotten as the tents that blew to pieces in every gale of wind; all the breath they had over from the fighting they spent in cursing the scoundrelly contractors, who were filling their own pockets at the cost of their country's honor and brave men's lives. But they stuck gamely to the Russians; they penned them in on three sides of their enormous fortress, and sapped closer and ever closer to the Great Redan, while Lord Raglan, who commanded, wrote home by every troop-ship and despatch-boat for men and food and ammunition, but first, last and most emphatically for *men*.

THEY sent him boys. They could not help it at that stage of the game. The news had reached home of how the troops were faring at the front, and only boys, who knew nothing of the meaning of war, could be induced to take the shilling. The raw, half-grown recruits were sent out in ship-loads at a time, nominally as food for powder; the Russian guns did kill a few of them, but famine, exposure and disease took most of the rest. Raglan wrote again for men—full-grown men, who could endure exposure. But there were no men to send him!

England was scoured for recruits. They dragged the slums of Manchester and London, and drew them blank; mealy-mouthed recruiting-sergeants were sent into the country districts, and into all the poorer parts of Ireland; posters proclaiming the need for men and the glories of military service were displayed in all the market towns—and the country-folk stood round in crowds and laughed at them; for even they knew. There were not one hundred recruits forthcoming as the result of the campaign; and Raglan wrote again for men.

Six Cabinet Councils were held in one week, and every single Minister had a foolish, fatuous plan to relieve the situation; some were tried. A bill was hastily drafted and rushed through Parliament authorizing the Government to recruit soldiers in Germany; recruiting agents were sent, and the country breathed again for an interval, hoping against hope for results.

But the news had filtered through the whole of Europe of how England was treating her gallant little army, and the German peasants showed no more eagerness for that kind of treatment than the English, Scotch or Irish had done. A few joined, but not enough to fill even one troop-ship, and it was not considered worth while to send them; they were paid for their few weeks of drilling, and dismissed.

But Raglan kept on writing home for men. His letters were growing bitter, and his descriptions of the awful state of things before Sevastopol more and more heart-rending. It began to look as though the war would have to be abandoned—as though the awful sacrifice and the unconquerable devotion of the tortured soldiers had gone for nothing.

The newspapers, that had at first glossed over things and had all along backed up the Government steadfastly, began to harp to another tune. Cabinet Ministers backed and filled, trying to feel the trend of public sentiment and ready to advocate peace with dishonor the moment the mob seemed ready for it. Probably within another month the remnants of the British army would have been ordered home again had England not possessed a Queen who knew her business and who could read the hearts of men.

She not only could read them, but she did! She looked from her high position down through all the different layers of society to the bottom dregs of it; and then she had a Royal Proclamation printed.

She invited her old soldiers to rejoin the colors. She did it on her own responsibility and asked it as a favor to herself; and the answer she received from city and town and village—from poor-house and doss-house; from slum and furrow—came flung back like an echo. In ten days there was an army! Her poor old pensionless fighting men who owed her nothing but their loyalty, and who had nothing else to give her but their lives, demanded the right to die for her.

They would have seen their country to the dogs, and the Government to the devil, and would have never raised a finger. But the Queen—why, GOD BLESS HER! They would march hungry into Hell and fetch out Satan if she wanted him. And gray-haired officers left their club armchairs and wept on parade, openly and un-

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ashamed, at the sight of their old die-hards back again.

ONCE more bugles and trumpets rang in the barrack squares; once more the echoing depots from Plymouth all the way north to Edinburgh and from Cardiff right across to Hull shook to the tread of companies; gun-chains jingled again on Portsmouth Hard, and the neigh of horses and the short, sharp, barked commands gave notice that the veterans had answered the summons of their Queen, and that Merrie England was on her feet again.

There was little talking, and next to no argument; these men were out to do the Queen's business and to do it quickly. They were mustered—four batteries of horse artillery, and ten regiments—under their old territorial designations; and for the most part they were led by the officers they had known before they left the service.

There was one exception. Colonel Lacy, a straight-backed, gray-haired man of sixty, left a sick-bed two days after the Proclamation and hurried to his depot; but he came too late. Every single vacancy was filled. He was a man, though, with a record, and was known personally to the Queen; so they gave him leave to pick one thousand men from among the other regiments, and to make them into a regiment of his own under officers of his own choosing.

Lacy's Regiment was the first of the Old Brigade to march down to a troop-ship; not a man of it—either officer or private—was under fifty years of age; they were gray-bearded, well-chosen fighting-men, and of all the famous regiments that have left the shore of England in the long, battle-blistered course of history probably there has been none better qualified than Lacy's to head the roll of honor.

The whole Brigade was reviewed on Southsea Common before it left, and the Queen came down from London to present its Colors to each regiment, and to wish the men Godspeed. They greeted her in grim silence—pieces held at the "present"—long, glittering, motionless rows of crimson-coated statues. Then suddenly, when the last Color had been entrusted to the man who was to take it into battle, and the Queen had sobbed out a few words of praise and gratitude, ten thousand rifles leaped flashing in the February sun, and from ten thousand throats there came a roar of fealty such as no other monarch ever listened to.

Cæsar heard something like it when the gladiators bowed to him in ancient Rome; but the gladiators were not free men, dying of their own free will; they had to do it. The Old Brigade was going out to face just as certain death as ever gladiator did; but the men were going because they chose to go, and for the sake of a Queen they loved. That crashing salute of theirs must have made a proud woman of their Queen.

THOSE were the early days of steam, and the transports were not dependent on the freak of wind and tide. It was still the month of February and the Russian Winter was still wreaking its icy vengeance on the warring armies when the Old Brigade arrived, and marched from Balaclava to Sevastopol.

Raglan reviewed them with a frown that hid his real feelings; and he swore at them because the words he would have said crowded together in his throat. They understood, and saluted him in silence. Then they themselves took the salute of the whole army, marching to the place assigned them past lines of ragged tatterdemalions, new-scorched and blood-soaked from storming the Gates of Hell; hungry, fever-stricken sappers leaned on picks and looked at them as they marched past with the earth-shaking, machine-like tramp that would restore confidence to sinners on the Day of Judgment, and a thrill went through the besieging army that bode trouble for Sevastopol. There was no cheering; men saved their breath for what was coming.

They pitched their camp in a quagmire of mud and blood and slush, and fell to as none but old soldiers can to make the best of it. But Raglan had no intention of letting them rot in the scurvy-ridden lines as so many other men had done, while the sappers dug and scooped and dug and zigzagged nearer and ever nearer to the Great Redan.

The Russians were still inside Sevastopol because their rear was open; Raglan had never yet had men enough to cork them in, and throughout the siege they had been able to march in fresh men when they chose to, and to march out the war-worn regiments that needed rest. The Russians had been hit, and hit hard; but, with an open rear in their favor, not all the invading armies in

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the world would have had a fair chance against them.

Now, with these splendid veterans at his disposal, was the time to close that rear, and Raglan sent for Colonel Lacy two days after the Old Brigade arrived.

"Do you know Sevastopol, Colonel?" he asked him. "I have heard that you were born here."

"Not born here, sir. My father was stationed here, though, and I lived in the city for eight years before getting my commission."

"Then you know the neighborhood?"

"Perfectly."

"Could you guide a brigade round to the rear by night and place it in such position before morning that it could prevent the Russians from marching in reënforcements from the north?"

"Without a doubt."

"We have sapped very close to the Great Redan now, Colonel; the idea is to block the Russian rear and then to attempt to take the place by storm; the French report that they are ready to attack the Little Redan the moment we give the word; if the Old Brigade could be in position behind Sevastopol to-morrow morning I would risk an attack at once. I want your opinion; do you think it is practicable?"

"Yes, sir."

"How would you direct the march?"

"Can you spare any cavalry, sir?"

"Not a man!"

"There are four batteries of horse artillery with the Brigade."

Raglan scowled, and nodded.

"There are two roads, sir. One of them runs due north, close to Sevastopol; the Brigade could follow that, but it would be unsafe to trust the guns along it. The other road runs northeast, five miles to the right, and four miles or so northeast of Sevastopol a crossroad connects the two. The guns, with one regiment as escort, could take the right-hand road, and the Brigade could wait for them. The guns with their escort would traverse two sides of a triangle, covered all the time by the rest of the Brigade traveling along the base of it. Almost due north of the fortress is a splendid position that we could seize, and once in possession of it we would be difficult to dislodge."

"Very well," said Raglan; "join your regiment, sir!"

Orders came that evening for the Old Brigade to fall in at dusk in full marching order, with three days' rations for men and horses; and there was a special order that Colonel Lacy should take his regiment and escort the guns along the right-hand road. There was a Lieutenant-General commanding the Old Brigade, and it was he who gave the Colonel his instructions; but he was annoyed that Lacy's opinion should have been taken instead of his, and was barely polite in consequence. The Colonel tried to explain to him the exact bearings of the crossroad, but he was cut short promptly.

"I am told you know the way, sir!" snapped the General; "You have your orders!"

So Lacy, drawn to his full height—proud as Lucifer, punctilious as Royalty itself—saluted, and rode off in the gathering gloaming to lead his regiment.

II

HE LED off himself, followed by four companies; behind them came the guns, with the remaining companies on either side of them. There was no danger of a rear guard action; it was in front and on either hand that the guns needed covering. The men marched off in silence, for the idea was to get behind the Russians before being discovered; there was little need, though, to check those graybeards for talking, for they were altogether different from the ordinary rank and file; they were anxious to put the Queen's business through.

Along their line at intervals swung lanterns that lent their procession a ghastly witchery; the struggling gun-teams, hauling the big black muzzle-loaders through the slush, sent up a cloud of eery-looking vapor to heighten the illusion; and as company after company maneuvered and swung into formation, the sharp words of command rang through the night like the cries of graveyard ghouls.

Weirder-looking ghouls than they peered at them past camp-fires and the ends of trenches, and grinned at them with envy; four batteries and an escort do not march northward in the night for nothing; they would surely be at hand-grips with the Russians before the dawn, but why—why by the God of everything unfair and damnable—should these bearded new arrivals be

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chosen for the hocking in place of the men who had struggled to get their fingers on the Russians for two long years? They envied them and damned them as interlopers in the same breath.

The last file had trudged beyond the farthest camp-fire, when suddenly one heavy gun gave tongue over on the far left wing; it was the signal for a heavy cannonade to throw the Russians off their guard. Mortars and howitzers and siege guns took up the chorus and poured a thunder-storm of shells into the Russian batteries.

The Russians suspected a night attack in force under cover of that bombardment, rallied their troops to the threatened point, and answered with every gun they had; their belching batteries lit up the space in front of them with livid shafts of flame, and straight back into the hell of fire and smoke the British infantry sent volley after volley of whining rifle-balls. Then snow began to fall and the firing ceased.

The snow came down in an endless, swirling flood, as though the gray sky above were full of snow all the way up to heaven and somebody had turned it loose; it fell silently, softly, ceaselessly, shrouding the blood-soaked countryside in clean new white; damping down the camp-fires, cooling the ardor of even the British gunners. The Russians saved their ammunition and went to sleep, for they knew well enough that no army on earth would risk a night attack in such a snowfall.

But Colonel Lacy marched on. He had his orders and he knew the way. When the gun-teams floundered in the snow-banks—and they floundered every other minute—he set men to hauling on the drag-ropes and, although all sign of the road was lost in less than twenty minutes, his wrist-compass gave him the direction and he held on due north. He was determined the Brigade should not wait long for him.

The four companies that marched in front packed the snow firmly as the night grew colder and the surface froze; then the horses and the men behind marched easier, and though as they advanced the snow fell swifter and ever swifter until the black sky seemed torn into a million dark gray tatters that whitened as they neared the earth, the trail began to slide beneath them rapidly to the *scrunch—scrunch—scrunch* of the regulation quickstep.

Before long, though, a wind sprang up, ice-ripped from the steppes of Russia; it cut them to the marrow, and blew their lamps out, and piled the snow in powdery drifts around their legs, and froze the breath on to their beards until their lips ached with the pain of it. And then a worse thing happened. The snow froze on the face of Colonel Lacy's wrist-compass, and in trying to scrape it off with blue-cold fingers he smashed the thing. Then the regiment lost itself!

THERE were no stars to judge their course by—nothing but dead black sky seen through gray snow whirled by a shrieking wind; but they marched on for more than an hour after Lacy knew that he was lost; he was hoping to pick up some recognizable landmark, or to stumble on some skirmishers from the main column; the column should be over on their left, not so very many miles away, and surely the column would march well protected.

The men, too, knew that they were lost, for they were old soldiers; they sensed it, knew it by instinct, and judged it by the behavior of their officers; but their business was to serve the Queen by obeying orders—that being the first rule of their service.

There was another rule of the service that was troubling Colonel Lacy. The commander of an artillery escort is responsible for the safety of the guns; he and his men must screen them and protect them—dying beside them if need be, but on no account deserting them. Should the guns lose their teams or become unmanageable owing to the conformation of the ground, he must stay by them and defend them until fresh teams arrive, or until the army can advance and rescue them. The guns are the main thing.

On the other hand, the guns are not responsible to him. They are a unit in themselves, acting independently; if they choose to leave him, they may do so, and he must follow them as best he can. The arrangement is easiest to understand when the senior officer chances to be a gunner; but in this instance the senior was Colonel Lacy, and he not only commanded the escort, but he had orders to lead the guns to a certain rendezvous.

The Colonel commanding the four batteries rode up to him and touched his shoulder;

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there was no other way of attracting his attention, for the snow fell so thickly that a man's voice would scarcely carry beyond his horse's head.

"We're marching round and round in rings, sir!" he shouted at him. "My horses are hard put to it to drag the guns in any case. I'm going to halt!"

Lacy sought out a bugler; one snow-draped figure looked exactly like another in that storm, but he discovered one at last.

"Sound the halt!" he ordered.

The bugler tried it, clapping his ice-cold instrument to his frozen lips and blowing with all his might; nothing came of it but a weird wail that sounded above the shrieking storm like a lost child crying.

"Warm that bugle and keep it warm!" ordered Lacy; then he turned to the gunner. "See if your trumpeter can do it, sir!"

It was that request, snarled out impatiently, that saved the guns at daybreak. The trumpeter failed even more signally than the bugler had done, and officers had to ride down the line and halt each battery and company in turn; as they rode, though, they found time to damn the buglers and trumpeters, so that until day broke the men breathed constantly into their instruments and kept their lips protected as best they could.

When the column halted there was a momentary consultation among the officers, held out of hearing of the men—ten paces or so to windward.

"I'll not risk the guns a yard farther, sir." said the gunner; "Let's find the way back!"

"Impossible! The snow has covered up our tracks."

"Then I'll halt here till daybreak! We're wearing out the horses to no purpose."

Lacy drew himself up to his full height; none but he could have shouted through the storm with dignity, but he impressed even the gunner. And gunners are an unimpressionable race of men.

"My orders are to join the rest of the Brigade at a point four miles northeast of Sevastopol; I shall obey them, sir!"

"Then you'll go alone," said the gunner; "I know my duty!"

"We're late," said Lacy; "the Brigade must be waiting for us somewhere over on our left; if we march in that direction we must surely run into their skirmishers. Why, sir, the assault on the Redan is timed for daybreak; if we're not in position by then, God knows what will happen! We're no use here!"

"All right," said the gunner; "change direction, and look for the Brigade."

"Change direction — Left!" roared Lacy.

"Forward — March!" And this time the bugle echoed him.

FOR two more solid hours the four-and-twenty guns and their escort of frozen infantry groped through blinding snow in what they imagined must be the direction of Sevastopol. The hell-glow that lay above the city by night was absent, for the snow obscured everything, and there were no stars to see by. The only thing they had to guide them was Colonel Lacy's sense of direction.

An hour before daybreak the snow ceased falling. Then almost at once a gap loomed up in front of them, sharp-hewn as though a cyclops' ax had done it, in a ridge that ran north and south one hundred yards away. And from beyond the gap came the snow-deadened thunder of an army marching.

"The Brigade!" said Lacy.

"The 'Old,' thank God for that!" came from the depth of the being of every weary one of them. The horses heard it, and their spirit rose in tune with the spirit of the men who rode them—as is the way of horses. They tugged at the traces willingly for the first time since midnight. The escort got into step again, and the quick *trudge—trudge—trudge* of well-trained infantry succeeded the fluttering noise of a thousand footsteps out of time. They marched through the gap in good formation.

It was a quite peculiar gap. A long forty-foot ridge ran for several miles on either hand—sharp, snow-draped and unclimbable. That gap was the one way through it, and it had evidently been cut there by engineers for military use, for the road descended through it at an easy angle and the sides were sharp and even. On the side nearer to Sevastopol and at right angles to the track the guns were following ran a good broad road, tucked close in under the shelter of the ridge and parallel to it; and although nothing of it could be seen as yet, the Brigade was coming down it, for the noise even of a snow-bound army is unmistakable.

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Lacy led the guns and escort straight across this second road, fronted them toward it, and halted, two hundred yards away; he intended to fall in in the rear and follow when his men and horses had had a much-needed rest.

The advance guard of the oncoming Brigade, marching in fours, led it by only a hundred yards or so; it was followed by a mounted officer who rode past without so much as a sign of recognition. Lacy thought he recognized him as the General who had snubbed him on the evening before, so he sat his horse in silence; it was no business of his to make advances. He had joined the Brigade as ordered, and now he could either wait for fresh orders or he could follow.

The Brigade marched on until the middle of it was abreast the gap. Then the sun rose. It rose straight in the Colonel's face, for he was facing eastward, and peered at him from above the ridge. The Brigade was still in darkness underneath the ridge, but on every hand the dull dead dreary gray-white of the snow changed in an instant to a billion jewels, set in a sea of melted rainbows; for a moment his eyes were dazzled.

Then the Brigade loomed out, dark and shadowy, but growing every moment more distinct; and he looked quickly from end to end of it.

Out licked his sword above his head, and he rose in his stirrups and looked behind him.

"Form rallying squares!" he roared.

The bugler behind him greeted the rising sun with a blast that the sun has listened to on too many stricken battlefields, and he was echoed by ten more bugles. Before the last ringing *Ta-ra-ra-rah!* had died away over the dazzling snow, the front ranks were kneeling in three ugly-looking squares, and behind them, their rifles at the "charge," stood the rear ranks, ready to fire over their heads.

"Charge your pieces!" ordered Lacy, steady as a rock.

And a wave of right hands lifted as the men bit off their cartridge-ends. This was no Old Brigade! In front of them—two hundred yards away or less, was a Russian army, ten thousand strong, marching somewhere up northward for a rest! And it was between the guns and the gap—the only road to safety.

III

THE Russians halted. An eagle rose over in the distance, glided overhead, and circled expectantly. For ten seconds his harsh cry was the only sound as the two sides stood and stared. The silence was broken then by a trumpet-blast that blared out from behind the rallying squares.

"Walk — March!" roared the Colonel of the Gunners.

The battery teams strained at the traces to the tune of the *smack—smack—smack* of whips, as the frozen gun-wheels broke out from the snow-ruts. It was the business of the guns to get away—and the guns had started.

"Terr —— ot!"

Crack came the whips again as the horses dug their toes in and the traces jingled. The guns began to bump over the frozen snow instead of sinking in, and the speed was growing.

"Canter!"

They were into their stride in a second—less than a second. The spirit of the men had fired the horses, and clouds of powdered snow went scooting right and left as the well-remembered rattle of the limbers rose behind them.

"Gallop!"

And the Gods must have held on in Olympus, for four batteries of horse artillery—hub to hub—advancing at the gallop is an amazing sight in peace. It is the whole quintessence of all the horrors rolled into one in war.

"Trumpeter! Sound the charge!"

"*Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra-rah!*" rang the trumpet, and three more echoed it.

"Now ride, men! And follow me!"

A roar went up like the snarl of a wolf-pack hard on a hunted buck, and the deserted escort roared again, flinging up their rifles in the same earth-shaking salute their Queen had heard at Southsea. Yells, and bugle-calls and oaths burst out from the enemy, and a stampede started—ten seconds too late! On went the guns, four-and-twenty thundering, jingling, bumping, saber-slashing juggernauts, wheeling one behind the other at the flog. Straight for the gap they rode, and burst through the Russian column, leaving a swath behind them like that a reaper cuts—an Armageddon swath of crimson blood-wet wheat that

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shrieked for mercy as they passed!

As the last gun curtsied up the short incline with the roar of hell behind it, infantry bugles rang again.

"Form companies!" roared Lacy.

Three sides of each square unfolded, and flicked, like a bird's wings opening, into one long crimson line.

"At pointblank range present your—pieces!"

"Fire!"

It was nothing short of murder at that short range.

Not a bullet missed.

"In quarter column on number one—Charge!"

The Russians came two ways at once to close the gap and follow the retreating guns; the veterans caught the double wave of men end-on at the bayonet-point; they drove the Russians through in front of them—killed them—and piled them warm and bleeding as a rampart across the gap! Then they turned at bay to cover the retreat of the batteries that were scooting across the snow southward like a black cloud.

The guns halted, though two miles away, and an officer rode back hell-bent-for-leather.

"My colonel's compliments, sir!" he said, saluting Colonel Lacy.

"Tell him to save the guns!" snapped Lacy. "I'll hold this pass."

"But——"

"Tell him to do his duty—save the guns!"

"Good-by, sir!"

"Good-by, my boy!"

To the rear, four or five miles to the eastward of where the guns were, rode a British officer, spurring a winded horse—crimson and blue and yellow braid on a background of glittering snow—his bearskin laid well back on his head, and his sabretache streaming out behind him. He was headed straight toward the gap, and the rear ranks of the rear company saw him and passed the word along.

"News of the Brigade!"

A MURMUR rose and rippled from rank to rank and ended in a growl. The Brigade would find nothing to be ashamed of when it got there! Colonel Lacy rode out in front as proud of his command as Lucifer was on the day he lost his job in Paradise; he had more right, though, than Lucifer, for surely no commander ever led men like his before. A Russian officer had waved his handkerchief, and he was riding out to meet him.

"I presume you surrender, sir?" said the Russian, in perfect English.

"Certainly not!" said Lacy; "I'll see you —— first!"

And the veterans behind him flung their rifles up and roared again. They laughed, most of them.

"Very good, sir. Defend yourself!" said the Russian, turning his back.

And Lacy turned his, and sat his horse in the middle of the roadway behind the hedge of fixed bayonets that blocked the enemy's only means of access to the retreating guns.

It was the guns the Russians wanted. They could have starved the regiment out, or mowed them down with rifle fire; but to get the guns they would have to hurry. For horse artillery can streak across the ground like blown dust devils. They had formed in dense array of regiment on regiment and the huge mass clove asunder suddenly, as the Red Sea opened up for the hosts of Israel; and down the passageway they left rode a regiment of Cossacks.

It was sheer, rank madness, for the Russian General counted on the very sight of them to scare the British. He might as well have tried to scare the ridge that ran snow-draped on either side of them.

The Cossacks swept onward with a yell, twirling their lances and riding like men possessed. They, too, counted on the moral effect they were accustomed to producing. Two volleys met them—two thunderstorms of big round rifle-balls, let loose at fifty yards by men who were neither conscripts nor afraid of conscripts; and what was left of the regiment of Cossacks slunk back again under cover of the brigaded infantry.

Then up rode the British galloper and reined in his weary charger at Colonel Lacy's stirrup.

"I've been looking for you all night, sir!" he panted, handing him a note.

Lacy took it, and tore it open:

> Return at once; owing to the storm the general assault has been postponed. Raglan.

"So they're not assaulting the Redan?"

"No, sir."

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"And the Brigade?"

"Is in quarters, sir."

"Men!" said Lacy, his clear voice ringing like a bugle in the frosty air; "we can best serve her Majesty by dying here! There has been a mistake; the Brigade remained in camp. All we can do is save the guns, and we can save them only by not surrendering!"

"No surrender, sir! No surrender!" came the answer.

"Then charge your pieces!" he ordered sternly.

Then he drew out a pencil and scribbled hastily on a sheet of paper.

"Take my horse," he ordered the galloper, "and take this note to Lord Raglan; present my compliments to his lordship and tell him that Lacy's regiment will do the service no discredit. Now go, sir!"

The officer changed horses, and saluted. "Good luck, sir!"

"Good-by!" said Lacy; "don't forget to present my compliments to his lordship!"

THE Russians still had a chance to take the guns, for no horses in the world can pull ordnance at a gallop across a snow-field for more than a mile or two; and Cossack horses, accustomed to the snow, could have overhauled them if the passage through the gap were forced in time.

They started in to force it. They marched men to the attack with the utter disregard for human life that characterizes Russian tactics, company by company, covered by a converging rifle-fire from either flank, and the dwindling regiment of veterans fed the front ranks steadily, stepping into the gaps and answering the galling rifle-fire volley for volley.

Their ammunition gave out presently, and only enough of them were left to block the roadway with one thin, red, double line. Then the Russian called his forces off and waved his handkerchief again.

"For the love of God, surrender, sir!" he shouted.

"No surrender!" roared the veterans, closing in together and preparing for the last struggle.

"You have heard your answer!" said Lacy. "Now, steady, men! Close in round the Colors, and strike a hard blow for the Queen!"

The Russian had no alternative; it was as plainly his duty to capture the guns as it was Lacy's duty to defend them. So he marched a regiment up to give the *coup de grâce*, and sent them in with bayonets to meet their foe on an equal footing at least so far as weapons were concerned.

Even then the battle lasted for another twenty minutes—till the guns were out of sight beyond the sky-line and beyond all hope of capture. The veterans closed in round their remaining officers in a steaming, reeking shambles of crimson slush, till the last man stood across his Colonel's body with the Colors down on the snow behind him!

They tried to capture him, but taking a bear at bay would have been a simpler task, and they had to cut him down. With his last effort he thrust his bayonet home to the locking-ring in a Russian stomach, and with his last breath he shouted, as the muzzle of his rifle struck the Russian's tunic:

"For the Queen—Gawd bless her!"

Then the Cossacks leaped their horses over the piles of slaughtered soldier-men and set off in pursuit of the guns they could never catch.

The Russians bore no malice. They had slain because they had to, in submission to an exigency of war. They buried the British side by side with their own men, and stood bareheaded while the firing-party boomed out the soldiers' requiem. But they shuddered when they thought of the fortress left behind them, and remembered that it was an army of men such as these that was besieging it. God help Sevastopol!

IT FELL; and they make V. C.'s of Russian cannon captured there. They have made five hundred of them, and there are cannon enough to make a hundred thousand more. To set off against the cannon the Russians have the Colors of one British regiment; but the regiment was dead to a man before they got them!

The veterans had kept their promise to their Queen, and had laid down their lives for her; and, as Colonel Lacy had promised in his message to Lord Raglan, the regiment had held the gap and had done no discredit to the service. The big, green, nameless mound that hides their bones is only one of a hundred such, scattered across the globe, that prove what a Queen can do who knows how to read men's hearts. God bless her!

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The Boob

(being merely a case of a fool and his money)

by Thomas Grant Springer

SERGEANT GEORGE WALLACE HALL, of English birth and American training, gave a final twirl to his rebellious four-in-hand, buttoned the vest of his new suit, set his Stetson jauntily on his curly head and viewed with considerable satisfaction the reflection that smiled back at him from the small mirror which hung on the walls of the non-com.'s quarters.

After five years' service in the regular army, during which time he had risen to the rank of first sergeant, and, by a little judicious gambling and more or less careful saving, had accumulated a matter of twelve or fifteen hundred dollars, he was about to leave the post with an honorable discharge and his more or less honorable bank-roll, in large bills, in his breast pocket.

Sergeant Hall mentally masticated the problem of his future with pleasant anticipation. The possibilities of a small ranch in California had certain seductions; but first he craved a taste of the world as he had not yet seen it—through the eyes of a gentleman of leisure. He deemed his education and observation sufficient to permit him to pose as an English gentleman of means, and with good looks and careful manners perhaps he might even take a chance in the matrimonial market if he played his cards well. It did not strike him as an impossibility.

At any rate, the city lured him, and he would answer her siren call.

To a man of shrewd brains, such as the Sergeant considered himself to be, unhampered by the hair-splittings of a finer conscience, Hall figured that the world owed him an easy living; especially if one had a small capital on which to rely until the gates of chance opened on the plum-garden where the fruit was ripe for the plucking. It was, therefore, with little regret that he turned his back on the post, leaving soldiering for those less fitted for the broader life he was to enter, and started on his twenty-two-hour ride to the gay city by the western sea to taste the joys of metropolitan life, so long a dim and misty future dream to him.

MR. "SLIM" BURTIN was completing his late breakfast in a Market Street restaurant, sipping the last of his coffee and skimming over the morning papers for hotel arrivals. Now and then he glanced up to note the influx of new guests whom he seemed to appraise with a quick and somewhat shifty eye. Finally he consulted his watch, picked up his check, sauntered out and directed his steps toward the Ferry Building, looming large and ponderous at the foot of the street. His eyes took note of the passing pedestrians with rapid, comprehensive glances.

An uneasy alertness, a quick measuring of humanity, seemed to be his predominating characteristic. He had gone scarcely a block when he turned sharply—a light hand had been laid upon his shoulder. His half-startled expression gave way to a relieved grin as his eyes met those of a rather small, neatly dressed young man of perhaps too smooth appearance.

"Hello, pal!" exclaimed his accoster, "I'm late, but I overslept and beat it down as soon as I could. I missed you at the joint!"

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"Nix on that hay gag," replied Slim. "You never could keep a date unless it was with a skirt. Have you 'scoffed' yet?"

"No, but it won't take me a shake. You mush on down the street and see if you can cop a boob, and I'll be at 'Forty-Two' long before you show."

"Have you got the line-up?" asked Slim anxiously.

"Surest thing you know, bo! Danby is there now, and he'll be as tickled as the dog that ate the duster to act as manager if we pass the 'office' up to him!"

"Good! How's your form to-day?"

"Fine and dandy, kiddo! Eye and hand never better, and drove the water-cart last night like I had a job with the city!" He laughed easily and fell into step with Slim as he turned again down the street.

"You look up to the level, all right," and Slim nodded an approving head.

"I'm above that," laughed the Kid, then he plucked suddenly at Slim's sleeve. "Gee, Slim, pipe that across the street—he looks as if he was made to order! Nail him; he looks good to me! I'll be at the joint by the time you land there."

Slim followed the Kid's indicating finger and took stock of the object of his remarks.

"I'll make a pitch, but he looks like a wise one to me. You go on and set 'em up, Kid, and if he's a live one I'll land him in an hour."

"You're on," replied the other, as Slim crossed the street in the wake of their prospective game. The Kid saw him fall in on the trail, then turned quickly to the restaurant to fortify himself with a hurried breakfast.

II

MR. GEORGE WALLACE HALL, of London, England, according to the register of the St. James Hotel, had arrived at that noted hostelry the evening before. He had taken a luxurious suite, retired early, and morning found him fresh from bath and shave, partaking of an excellent breakfast. This disposed of, he deposited one thousand dollars with the clerk, and with two hundred and forty in his clothes he started out for a leisurely tour of the city. He was well pleased with himself and the world he found about him.

From street to street he wandered, glimpsing the shops and bazaars—those magnets for the well-dressed, beautiful women of the West, on whom his eyes rested approvingly. The traffic of the streets denoted the marts of trade open to all who cared to engage, the cafés and theaters luring to the call of pleasure. Here and there, up and down, across and back he roamed, familiarizing himself with the life so new, yet so delightful to him. The spell of this magic city by the western sea was creeping over him, the careless unconventionality of its air was being breathed by him with every respiration.

At length he found himself slowly strolling on Market Street, viewing its kaleidoscopic panorama with the lazy eyes of leisurely enjoyment. At the corner of a cross street a gentleman stumbled, then clutched Hall in an effort to regain his balance. His hat rolled into the gutter, and with awkward apologies he released his hold to rescue it.

"I really beg your pardon," he said, brushing his derby with hands that shook with nervous embarassment. "A man unused to city streets finds asphalt —— awkward!"

Hall laughingly reassured him:

"Oh, that's all right. I'm a bit of a stranger myself."

The man's face lit up with a smile. He was neatly dressed and of pleasant features; not a typical city man, but more of the appearance of a well-to-do rancher.

"Well, I'm glad I didn't bump into a fellow who would have thought I was an awkward jay, even if he was about right. I say, won't you step in and have a cigar with me?"

Hall laughingly declined, but the stranger drew him into the convenient cigar-stand and before he knew it he was snipping the end from a perfecto and was actually drawn into a conversation with the man of his chance adventure.

"You see my name's Wright—Edward D. Wright—and I'm from Butte, Montana—down here hunting for some mining machinery. You can't get it nearer than 'Frisco—I believe they want you to say San Francisco—and so I took a run down."

"Yes, I believe they really insist on your calling it San Francisco," laughed Hall, "but you see I only arrived last night."

"Well, well—we're two of a kind, then," said Wright. "Where do you hail from?"

"Oh, I'm from London—my name is Hall."

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INTRODUCTIONS thus established, Wright insisted on cementing their acquaintance with a drink, and when Hall had reciprocated and they had both 'repeated' several times, they began to feel like old friends and strolled up the street together, chatting with a considerable degree of intimacy.

Turning off Market Street they passed a large billiard parlor with enormous plate-glass windows that gave a full view of the interior. Wright paused a moment in apparently unconscious interest.

"Ever play pool?" he asked Hall, as they resumed their stroll.

"Why, yes," replied Hall, "I used to play a fair game, but I haven't done much lately."

"Neither have I," Wright resumed, "but I used to be a fiend for it. I came by it naturally, for my father was the billiard champion of my home town and one of the best players in the State. I took more to pool myself, and finally beat the old man's record, and I won several professional tournaments, but that was ten years ago. It's wonderful what you can do with a cue when you know how."

"It certainly is," agreed Hall.

"By the way, that reminds me," said Wright suddenly. "I have a friend who has a big billiard parlor somewhere in the city. Let me see," and he consulted his memorandom book; "here's his place, 42 E Street. Do you know where that is?"

"No, I don't know the city yet."

"It must be somewhere hereabouts. Let's ask the cop." And Wright turned to the policeman who stood swinging his club at the street crossing. "I say, officer, can you tell me where 42 E Street is?"

"This is E Street and you'll find 42 a block below," and he indicated the direction with his stick.

"Well, that's lucky," and Wright turned to Hall. "Let's go down and call on my friend. I haven't seen him since he left Butte."

Hall agreed, and they turned in the direction the policeman had pointed. "I'll introduce you to Dalton—he's a fine old sport I can tell you. Let's see," and Wright studied the numbers, "35, 37, why, there it is right across the street!" and they crossed to a large billiard parlor even more imposing than the one that had at first attracted their attention.

The interior was palatial. Eight billiard-tables were ranged in one row and a corresponding number of pool-tables in another. The walls were paneled with cue-racks and under them were ranged rows of chairs for spectators.

"Pretty nifty joint, eh?" remarked Wright. "I guess Dalton must have a mint in this. Wonder where he is?" and his eyes wandered about the room. Not finding the object of his search he stepped up to a uniformed attendant. "Is Mr. Dalton in?" he inquired.

"No, sir," the boy replied, "he's out to lunch, but he'll be back in about half an hour."

"Suppose we wait for him," said Wright, turning to Hall.

"Very well."

Wright began taking off his coat and moved over to the only vacant pool-table. "I'll play you a little game to kill time, and if I haven't lost my cunning I'll show you some pretty fancy shooting."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't stand any show with you," Hall answered dubiously.

"What's the difference? I'll stand the games for the fun of the thing, and then when I get your measure I'll give you a handicap."

Hall agreed, and the boy racked the balls while they selected their cues.

"Now," said Wright, spotting the cue ball, "I'll break and then you do your best so I can see what kind of a game you play."

"Very well—go!"

Wright failed to make a ball on the break, then Hall put down four balls before he missed. Wright made a difficult massé shot and then ran down seven balls with scarcely an effort. Hall shot and missed, whereupon Wright ran off the remaining balls, and as he made the last one remarked, "You play a pretty fair game, but you need a little practise."

THE game had taken barely five minutes, and Hall was much impressed with Wright's skill. As the attendant again racked the balls Wright said:

"Now you break and make all you can, for I'm going to run off every ball when I start," and he laughed with easy confidence.

Wright chalked his cue, and as Hall was preparing to shoot, a well-dressed, pleasant-looking young man stepped up to him. "I

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beg your pardon," the stranger addressed him, "but would you object to making the game three-handed?"

Before Hall could reply Wright came over to them.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Is this gentleman a friend of yours, Hall?"

"Why, no," the stranger cut in, "I just asked your friend here if he objected to making the game three-handed. My wife's on a little shopping tour and I have a little time to kill. I don't mind paying for the game if you don't mind my playing."

"Well, it's only a friendly game for the cigars," said Wright. "Can't you find some one else to play with?"

"There's no one in here just now that I know. The other tables are all full. I really beg your pardon, I only thought——"

"Oh, that's all right, stranger," interrupted Wright, "I don't mind your playing—do you, Hall?"

"Why, not at all," replied Hall quickly.

"Get a cue then," said Wright pleasantly; "it's just a friendly game, anyway."

As the stranger turned to the cue-rack, Wright said in a low voice, "Now don't let this fellow know that I'm a professional, and we'll have some fun with him. He don't look cheap, and we may get a bet out of him, you can't tell. It would serve him right for butting in," and Wright laughed good-naturedly as the stranger came back to the table, chalking his cue.

"All right, break 'em, Hall," said Wright; then as Hall bent to shoot, "Hold on," and he turned to the stranger, "maybe you wouldn't care to play our game if you knew what we are playing."

"Isn't it straight pool, the man making the most balls winning?"

"No, we're playing for the center ball for the cigars, and we smoke three-for-a-half."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed the stranger, "and to show that I'm a good sport I'll play your game. I butted in anyway, and I can quit when I want, can't I?"

"Sure," Wright replied a little quickly, "you can quit right now if you want to."

Hall, who rather liked the stranger's appearance and evident good nature, called out, "Here goes!" and broke the balls and the discussion.

He failed to make anything on the break.

"You don't seem to be able to do anything but scatter them," laughed Wright.

"Well, you didn't leave anything, at any rate," remarked the stranger as he shot and missed.

"It's all over but the shouting," laughed Wright, quickly putting down four balls, and as the last one rolled into the pocket he straightened up and said, "That's it—I guess you are stuck!"

"All right then, let's go get the cigars," and the stranger turned from the table. "They will be on you as soon as I get warmed up a little."

"Wait a moment," said Wright. "My friend and I have been playing some time and have our pockets full. If it's all the same why you can pay me for the game and call it square."

"Oh, very well," said the stranger, throwing a half-dollar down on the table. Wright put it in his pocket, and taking the last ball from the pocket spotted it with two others from the rack.

"Now, you see, I put this ball on the spot with the other two to protect it. Every time you make the center ball you get paid."

"I'm on," the stranger remarked.

"Now wait a minute. My friend and I have been playing some time and he is a few dollars behind, and I'm giving him a chance to get even. We are playing progressive pool; every time you make the center ball you get paid, and every time we double. You see, the game isn't finished until all the balls are off the table."

"Oh, I see," and the stranger nodded. "Progressive pool; the same as seven-up, solo or whist."

"Exactly," agreed Wright. "Now you make the center ball this time and we each pay you a dollar; if he makes it we each pay him."

"I'm wise, go ahead."

"All right," and Wright turned to Hall, "Go ahead, it's your shot."

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, as Hall made ready to shoot, "but I don't quite understand. I paid you; doesn't he pay you too?"

"Certainly," said Wright.

"Yes, but he didn't."

"Oh, that's all right, you see we usually settle after the game."

"Of course, you are friends, but suppose I make the ball, can he pay me?"

Wright turned to Hall with a sneering laugh. "Say, Hall, our friend here thinks you're broke. Give me a half-dollar."

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Hall passed it to him, laughing. The stranger begged his pardon. "Oh, that's all right," said Hall.

"It sure is," agreed Wright. "You are perfectly right, for we are strangers to you."

"Oh, no offense," said the stranger quickly, "I'm a good sport, you'll find; I only want to know where I stand."

"You stand in a good position to shoot if it's all settled," laughed Wright.

"You're right there," agreed the stranger, and bent over the table.

As he put down the next two balls, Wright said quietly to Hall, "Here's your money," slipping him the half-dollar he had just paid him. "Now don't let this fellow get wise to my being a professional, and I'll cut with you. Play carefully!"

IT WAS now Hall's shot, and the stranger had not made the center ball. Hall shot but missed, when Wright followed him, putting down two balls and then the center one. Both men paid him a dollar. Again the center ball was spotted; again after the other two had failed to make it, Wright put it down.

"Say, but you are mighty lucky," the stranger said, rather ruefully, as he paid Wright the two dollars. "It's a pretty good thing I cleaned up a pile on the ponies yesterday or this would be too stiff a game with the run of luck I'm having."

"Want to quit?" asked Wright.

"Oh, no; I guess I can stand it yet awhile," and so the game went on.

As the stranger shot once more, Wright slipped Hall back his money. Hall by this time could not see where he had a chance to lose, and relying on his new-found friend's skill and honesty (to him) he could see where there was a chance to pick easy money as the game continued; for the stranger, in spite of persistent bad luck, seemed to show no disposition to quit.

Now and then one or the other would win, but skill and luck showed Wright easily had a wide margin. The stakes had now risen to fifty dollars, and as Wright attempted to slip Hall his money the stranger suddenly cried out angrily:

"Say, look here!" and he confronted Wright hostilely. "What the —— are you doing, slipping him money? I thought I saw you do it before, but wasn't sure—now I'm on! I don't mind losing in a square game, but if you fellows think you've picked a good thing, you've got another guess coming! I know the manager here and he won't stand for any double-team work, and my uncle is a police commissioner, so I guess I won't get the worst of it! I'll play you all the pool you want for five cents or five dollars a point for all the money you can raise, but I want a square deal!"

"My friend," coolly replied Wright, in nowise disturbed by the outbreak, "you are very badly mistaken, but after your crack, if you want a game of pool for one, two, three, four or five dollars a point I guess you can get it, can't he, Hall?"

Hall nodded, a little dazed by the outburst, but with every confidence in Wright. If this excitable young man was letting himself in to be trimmed, why should not he be in on the pickings? Hall could not see where he was to come out of the encounter with anything but full pockets, as it was two to one, and his partner had proved himself an expert at the game.

At this juncture the stranger called a well-dressed, prosperous-looking, middle-aged man who was leaning against the cigar-stand. As he came over in answer to the beckoning the stranger said, "This is Mr. Davis, the night manager here. Sol, I want you to referee a game of pool for five dollars a point."

"Now see here, Neil," Mr. Davis protested earnestly, "you know very well we can't allow anything like that here. This is a billiard parlor, not a gambling joint, and the new State law is very stringent on any out-and-out gambling. It's three to five years, you know, and even stakeholders are liable to imprisonment."

"Well, you could referee a game if you didn't see any money, couldn't you?" asked Neil.

"Yes," replied Davis. "I can referee a game; but mind you, that's as far as it goes, and you'll have to hurry as I only have a little while."

"Remember," cut in Wright, "there are a hundred and twenty points in a game of pool. Do you want to play for points or balls?"

"Points," promptly responded Neil.

"At five dollars a point it's going to amount to something."

"I know what it amounts to. Are you on?"

Wright glanced at Hall, who nodded his

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assent. "All right," said Wright, "I'll take you on, but it's pretty stiff."

"Then I'll break them for luck," and Neil bent to shoot.

Davis was watching him, and Wright whispered hurriedly to Hall, "Play careful; I'll leave you in good position every time I miss."

Neil, meantime, had failed to make a ball on the break and chalked his cue, cursing at his luck. Just then some one called to Mr. Davis, and he left the table hurriedly in answer. The play proceeded without him. Wright followed Neil and missed, but the cue-ball stopped in splendid position and Hall ran down five balls before he missed. When he did he left the cue-ball in a bad position and Neil had no chance on his shot.

Wright followed but scratched, which gave Hall the right to place the ball wherever he pleased, so by careful playing and a good run of luck he made seven balls before he missed. Neil by this time was plainly nervous, which apparently accounted for his inability to make a ball. Wright followed him with the same result, leaving the cue-ball in excellent position once more, so that Hall had no difficulty in running down the remaining three balls, giving him the entire number of points, which at five dollars each amounted to six hundred dollars.

NEIL laid down his cue in open disgust. "Well, I'll be ——!" he said bitterly. "That's all for me; I know when I've had enough," then he looked around, "Why, where's Davis?" he asked.

"He was here a moment ago," said Wright, looking about. "There he is over by the cigar-stand."

"Well, come over and I'll settle," and Neil led the way to the cigar-stand, pulling out a fat roll of bills as he went. They stopped together at the counter, and Neil began counting out the bills into Hall's hand. Suddenly he stopped and looked at him fixedly. "One moment," and he took the bills from Hall. "Suppose I had won, would you have been as prompt in paying up?"

"Why, of course he would," Wright answered.

"Say, you seem to know a lot about it!" and he turned quickly back to Hall. "Would you?" he asked sharply.

Hall hesitated, plainly embarrassed.

"Oh, Sol," Neil called, and Mr. Davis stepped briskly up to them. "I lost that game. Now here is six hundred dollars. I leave it in your hands, and just as soon as this man covers it with a like amount hand it over to him."

Davis took the money, and turned in surprise to Hall. "Why, haven't you got enough to cover it?" he asked.

"Of course he has, haven't you, pal?" and Wright caught his arm.

"Why — why — yes," stammered Hall, "but it's up in the St. James Hotel safe."

"Well, you go and get it and I'll stay here with our friend and Mr. Davis until you come back and cover it. Is that agreeable to you, gentlemen?"

"Is that satisfactory to you, Neil?" asked Davis.

"Why, yes; all I want is to see him cover my money."

"I'll be back in ten minutes, then," and Hall started for the door when Wright followed him. As soon as they were out of earshot of the others Wright said, "By the way, Hall, if you can lay your hand on any more money, bring it along. This fellow seems to have a roll and thinks he is a wise one, so we may get another chance at him."

"I've got a thousand dollars at the hotel," Hall answered.

"Good; bring it along, and with what I've got I guess we can give him a little run. Hurry up; he may get out of the humor, and I'll stay with him till you get back."

In ten minutes Hall returned and counted six hundred dollars in bills into Mr. Davis's hand. As that gentleman started to turn over the two packages to him Neil cried, "Wait a moment!" then turning to Wright he asked, "Now where is your money?"

"What's that got to do with it?" snapped Wright.

"A whole lot!" Neil retorted. "I forbid Davis to turn over that money until you put up yours! I'm from the State of Missouri, and you got to show me! This was a three-handed game, and if I had won I want to see money enough in sight to pay me. Would you have come through if I had won?"

"Of course I would!"

"Then show me!"

"I haven't got that much on me."

"I'll lend it to you, Wright," said Hall quickly, as he was getting alarmed at the turn affairs had taken.

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"Oh, yes, and I guess you would have lent it to him if I had won," sneered Neil.

"Well, of all the welshers I ever saw!" Wright burst out. "Say, Hall, just put that money up in Mr. Davis's hands for me, will you? We'll let him decide. Now are you satisfied?"

"I guess I'll have to be," admitted Neil grudgingly.

"Now if this had been done in the first place," said Mr. Davis, "all this needless and unpleasant argument would have been avoided. This man here won the money fair and square, as far as I know. Now will you let me decide all questions?"

"I will," said Wright.

"So will I," said Neil, and Hall nodded an affirmative—for the manager's apparent fairness admitted of but one decision in his mind.

"Very well," continued Mr. Davis. "Now the money question is as it should have been in the first place. I did not see all of the game, as I was called away. Now I propose that the game be played over, the same man to break the balls, and the man getting the most number of balls receives the money, and you will have to quit playing after this as we can't allow it in the place. I'm awfully sorry this happened, and I'm stretching a point now in allowing you to play it off, but I want to be fair with you all."

"You certainly are," said Wright, with a confident glance at Hall. "And now, young fellow, go on and break them and make all you can, for you'll have no more chance to squeal!"

"Oh, I don't know," retorted Neil, "I agreed to the decision and I guess my luck is due to turn pretty soon."

It certainly did, for he made three balls on the break and never faltered until nine balls had been put into the pockets, when he laid down his cue and, walking up to Davis, said, "You might as well pass over the money, as you can see now there isn't a chance of either one of those sure-thing men winning!"

His statement was indisputable, and Mr. Davis shrugged his shoulders and passed him the money. He stuffed it into his pocket, and without a word hurried out. Wright stood as if dazed, then turning to Hall, who was simply paralyzed by the unexpected turn of events: "For God's sake, can you beat it?" he gasped. "Let's get out of this and get a drink; it's got me going!"

III

AS THEY gained the street Wright grew remorseful.

"I'll make it all good to you, old man—it was all my fault. You sha'n't lose a cent by it, but did you ever see such luck?"

Hall was willing to admit that he never had.

"Let's go up to your hotel; it's nearer than mine," proposed Wright, and soon they were seated in the bar with a bottle of Scotch and a siphon before them. After they had a drink or two Wright handed Hall fifty dollars in gold. "Here's that last bet I tried to slip you when that piker raised his holler," he said, "and I'll wire my bank in Butte for twelve hundred dollars to square myself with you. That will be here by to-morrow afternoon, and then I can breathe easier—but as for that little tin-horn, I'm not done with him yet; or that manager either!" He leaned across the table and lifted the skirt of his coat. "I'm going back and get that fellow," he said in a dangerous voice, and Hall had a glimpse of the butt of a heavy-calibered revolver.

"For God's sake," gasped Hall, "don't be a —— fool!"

"Not me, but I don't allow any one to do me and get away with it! But let's forget it for a while. Plenty of time later, and it can wait. Now let's dine together—where will it be? Got any choice?"

Hall had no particular preference, and Wright named a popular place to which they repaired, but not until the tide of the Scotch bottle had run low and both were feeling somewhat mellow. As they were hungry, they dined early, and during the meal Wright proposed the theater, to which he telephoned for seats after some argument.

They finally separated, after making an appointment in the lobby of Hall's hotel for eight o'clock. Hall dropped into a chair near the door, and almost at the same time a gentleman took the next one to him and became absorbed in the evening paper. The lobby clock crawled to eight and then passed it.

Hall noted that his friend was late, and began to grow nervous. He thought of tele-

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phoning to his hotel, and then suddenly remembered that he did not know it. The moments passed and he grew more and more ill at ease. Wright had drunk quite a bit; perhaps he had lain down for a nap and forgot to leave a call. He thought how foolish he was not to have obtained the name of his hotel. It was now twenty minutes past eight—surely something must have gone wrong.

Just then a gentleman came in the main entrance and began to scan the faces of the loiterers in the lobby, then hurried over to the gentleman sitting next to Hall.

"I beg your pardon for being late, old man," he cried in a voice plainly audible to Hall, "but I just witnessed the hottest fight I ever saw."

"Is that so?" asked his friend, looking up and folding his paper. "Where was it?"

"Why down at that big billiard parlor at 42 E Street." Hall's heart stood still, and then his ears strained to catch every word. "It seems a couple of fellows were skinned out of some money there this afternoon—quite a little sum," the stranger went on, "and as near as I can get it one of them was pretty sore. He evidently got to drinking, and went back this evening to get satisfaction. He found the fellow who trimmed him, and after some high words blows were struck, then, before any one could interfere, the sucker seized a cue and brained the man who fleeced him.

"The manager, a fellow named Davis, I believe, tried to catch the man, when he whipped out a gun and shot him through the chest. I guess they are both done for. They got the murderer, but it seems he had a pal with him this afternoon and the police are looking for him now, but the other fellow won't squeal. It's about time they got after these gamblers here, and I guess this thing will rather bring things to a head."

"Well, I should hope so!" and the other man rose, leaving Hall petrified with horror as they moved away.

Slowly the situation dawned upon him. He remembered Wright's growled threat to get his man, and the fact that he had sufficient liquor in him to be in an ugly and irresponsible mood. He glanced nervously at his watch; it was fifteen minutes to nine. Surely there could be no doubt that Wright was the man who had committed the double tragedy, and he, Hall, was his unwitting accomplice. But the authorities did not know him, neither did the principals. He was a stranger to them and a stranger to the city. The only sensible thing to do was to get out as quickly as possible.

He walked nervously to the desk and consulted the railroad time-table. An eastern train left at ten ten. It would give him time to get away, and once back at the post reënlistment would hide all trace of him from the prying eyes of the civil authorities. He thanked God that Wright had given him the fifty dollars. That and the loose silver he had in his clothes would be sufficient for his hotel bill and railroad fare.

He hastened to his room, telephoned for a taxicab to be ready for him at nine forty-five and began hurriedly packing his effects. An hour and a half later Mr. George Wallace Hall, from the window of a Pullman, watched the lights of the city across the bay grow dimmer, and the click of every fish-plate joint was as music to his ears.

AT THE same time in a rear card-room at Number 42 E Street sat three men smoking and talking earnestly. The door opened and two others entered.

"Well, he's off," said one of them, with a laugh, as he dropped into a chair. "Dick and I trailed him, and he beat it out on the ten ten so hot that he simply burned up the track doing it."

A general laugh went up, and then one of the men, a well-dressed young fellow, laid a pile of gold and notes on the table.

"Well, we may as well split up, then," he remarked, beginning to separate the money into piles. "Here you are, 'Mr. Montana,' four hundred; see if that's right. Here's mine, six hundred, count it, and remember we have to send three hundred of that up above. My dear manager, pray accept this fifty for your kind offices in refereeing the game. Here you are, Duke; there's fifty apiece for you and Dick. You fellows must have thrown that scare into him in fine style."

"We sure did. You ought to have seen his face!" and Duke laughed at the memory.

The young man rose, stuffing the money into his pockets.

"Come on, boys," he said, "let's have a few bottles of wine to drink to 'the boob.' He surely was made to order!"

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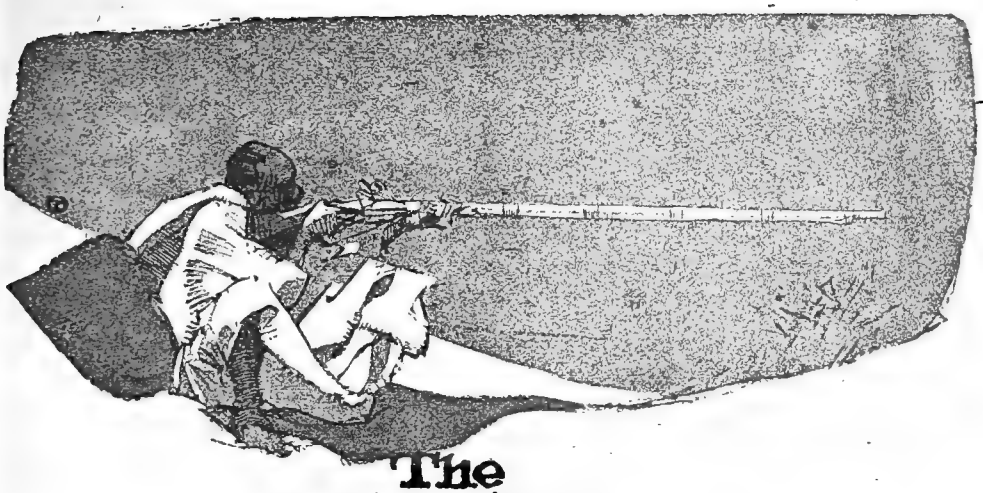

The Marriage of Kettle

by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne

SYNOPSIS: Owen Kettle, mate of the *Norman Towers*, seizes needed coal from a German steamer in the Sargasso Sea. Violet Chesterman, a passenger, transfers to the *Towers* and becomes interested in Kettle. At Liverpool, Miss Dubbs, barmaid, rescues Kettle from thugs, becomes engaged to him, and secures him the captaincy of the *Wongaroo*, chartered by Violet's brother, Sir George, to search the west coast of Africa for a wrecked steamer with valuable copper. Kettle makes McTodd engineer. Violet, with Miss Dubbs as companion, joins the ship. The wreck proves to be the old *Norman Towers*. Miss Dubbs, jealous of Violet, breaks her engagement. Sidi Mohammed Bergash, a native Berber but a Cambridge graduate, seems interested in the wreck. Kettle alone suspects him and shifts his ship's position in time to sink attacking native boats. Bergash makes friends with the owners. His mother and suite visit the ship. Kettle and McTodd explore the *Norman Towers* and find the Berbers have sunk huge stones to prevent her being moved. On their return they find a note saying Sir George, Miss Dubbs and Violet (the last by now quite in love with Kettle) have departed on a visit to Bergash's stronghold.

CHAPTER XXX

IN THE ATLAS FOOTHILLS

THE shifts and strategies by which Captain Owen Kettle made his way from the shore of the lagoon to the foot of the rock on which the castle of Sidi Mohammed Bergash is perched would, if they could be got hold of, make a book of themselves. But, unfortunately, almost the whole of that piece of history depends on the account given to me by Kettle himself and he has always more of an eye for results than for details by which they were built up. In speaking of the period he could not rise much higher than, "Oh, yes, I had a pretty tough tramp of it," or "Those argant horns play James with a uniform," or again, "Worst thing was, I had forgotten to take along a cake of soap, and couldn't wash my hands."

But, as I hinted, it has been possible to pick up bits of the thread of his adventures here and there from other sources, and with these to construct a tolerably coherent whole.

When once the boat had set him down upon the beach, he worked his way resolutely along to the point where the caravan with the women had first debouched from the sandhills, guided only by his sailor's eye for distance and direction. The night was still black dark, but the ribbon of phosphorescence which marked the edge of the lagoon gave him a clear outline of the shore.

By the time he got down to the point opposite the rusted *Norman Towers* where the track turned inland, a scared moon ap-

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peared overhead, dodging in and out of the racing clouds. Dunes lay beyond the beach, some of bald yellow sand, some bristling with a dry, coarse grass. From amongst them somewhere a wandering jackal complained (when the moon shone out) of pains in his inside, and was answered by a tribal sympathizer away up in the mountains beyond.

At the back of the dunes came a belt of marsh, smelling evilly of sulphur and stale sea salt, and flickered over by fireflies. Captain Kettle mired himself badly in this, and being always a spruce man in his personal appearance, cursed his luck with point and fluency. Not till he was halfway through did doubts as to direction assail him. The marsh had obviously been paddled over by countless footmen. Would it carry a camel? "Not unless they took along a steam crane with them in case of breakdowns," he told himself.

So, with still more hard language, he went backwards over the trail, and on the edge of the marsh found (as he suspected) that the horse-hoofs and the camel-pads had swung off at right angles to the main trail and that the road that interested him bore away to the north and east. It was his first attempt at tracking, and though in after life he came to be almost as good at picking up "sign" as an Australian black, it must be remembered that I am writing now of his apprentice days in the art of adventure, and can only depict him as the imperfect practitioner that he then was.

It was round at the back of this salt marsh that he came across those argan trees about whose sharp, bayonet-shaped spikes he spoke so feelingly, and here for a while discovery of the path was fairly simple. It twisted and it wound, often curving back almost on itself; it seemed to delight in going as much up hill and down dale as the contours of the country would permit of; it was narrow, and it was cluttered with boulders; and, as is the unvarying habit of the native African road, it had faults enough to make the shade of the late John Macadam writhe if it ever blew that way and saw how the name of road could be disgraced.

Once a sudden rustle and a rattle as of sticks clearing for action put the little sailor on the hasty defense, and Winchester in hand he rushed fiercely forward, on the old but erroneous principle that it is always safer to attack than to defend. A cloud sliding away from the moon, however, showed him that the path was held by nothing more formidable than a big porcupine that he had disturbed at its evening meal. The beast was a mass of angry, bristling quills, and in another step Captain Kettle would have stumbled on them and been badly pricked. But as it was, and as the creature showed no sign of budging, he gave it right of way and passed round it in a generous circuit.

Another time a sound of wild pig crossed the path, and the boar in charge, a huge bristling tusker of the narrow variety, a good four feet high at the withers, scented man, and had three-quarters of a mind to charge and rip. The trifling detail that Kettle had him covered with a steady rifle barrel did not enter into his majesty's calculations. He had not seen a rifle before, and even if he had known it intimately that would not have made the smallest difference to his piggish mind if he had felt in the mood for a charge. But some matter of domestic interest flitted across his slow-moving brain, and with a grunt and a whetting of his tushes on an argan trunk as he passed, he lumbered on into the bush after his wives and their piglings.

With the coming of morn the birds began to wake. When the sun commenced to rise from beyond Africa, there, in the higher flats of the atmosphere, which were first to be lighted, swam an eagle of the Atlas and a couple of carrion fowl, already on station; the partridge and quail began to scutter across the path in another hard day's search for food; and when day was fairly alight great flocks of blue rock pigeons from the higher Atlas crags flew swooping down, one flock after another, to drink in some unseen wady. A couple of aoudad—mouflon, they call them elsewhere—the primeval sheep, to be more precise, surprised by the dawn, galloped past, making for the security of those high, inaccessible crags which have kept them from man's extinguishing weapons down through so many countless centuries.

"*The daily miracle of the dawn*"—the line ran through Captain Kettle's head, and he struggled hard to find rhymes to match it, and other lines to carry on what he had seen. He was in as desperate a situation as a man well could be; all the country, he knew full well, was against him, and the custom was to cut a throat first and to inquire into motives afterward; but, somehow or other, a

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tight place like this always seemed to make him quaintly happy and to bring up within him that appetite for the making of verse which grew so largely to be a habit with him throughout all his stormy career.

He had walked all night; he was bone-weary; the dew chilled him, and by the thorns of the argans he had been cruelly torn; but his spirit was bright within him, and although through sheer exhaustion he was at length driven to pull off the path and rest under the shade of a magnolia, it was only his limbs that found repose. The scent of the pink waxen blossoms above him, the smell of the clean earth, the sounds, the colors, the noises of the birds filled him with an ecstasy that with him had only one mode of expression. He drew from his pocket paper and an end of pencil, and the stanzas rolled out with curious ease.

It was wonderful poetry.

CHAPTER XXXI

ONE OR TWENTY?

THE two Moors stalked him while he was engaged in this occupation, and they neared him so successfully that they did not consider him worth wasting a charge of powder and shot on. Powder is an expensive item on the southern flats of the Atlas, and a gas-pipe gun only stands a limited amount of discharges before it bursts, as is evidenced by the fact that the pretty village in Norfolk where the fragile flints are made supplies only one per gun, as there is never a demand for a second. The hooked dagger on the other hand, which is so effective for the upward jab, suffers no deterioration from a little honest work, and lasts the lifetime of two ordinary fighting-men.

By way of doing the thing artistically and not getting in one another's way, the pair separated a dozen yards away from their game and worked out one on either flank. The word for "Go!" was "Allah!" and when one shouted it and jumped, the other jumped also from the other side.

But Captain Kettle had the activity of the sleeping dog approached by the sudden cart-wheel. Even while the knives stabbed through the air, he sprang out backward from where he was squatting and landed on heels and wrists. Practically the same instant he was erect on his feet and springing forward again with all his force. His fist shot out before him, and, with every ounce of his weight driving it behind, impacted just below the corner of the right-hand Moor's mouth. The man's jaw broke in two places, and he dropped as if he had been poleaxed.

Number two Moor again aimed a savage upward slash, which was near enough to slit the front of the sailor's coat; but the worst of that cut is that, though hard to parry, it leaves the performer at a disadvantage if the stroke misses. Kettle caught the brown wrist on its upward swing and swirled it on upward and backward, and the victim screamed as the arm jerked out of its socket and tore the ligaments.

"And that's stopped your piano-playing for a week or two," said Captain Kettle. "Now stand exactly still in your tracks. By James, I wish I'd been able to get at a gun quick enough and shot the pair of you! You'll be up to mischief if I leave you alone here for ten minutes. Well, you must be attended to further."

He hauled off the man's *jellab*, and tore from it half a dozen strips which he knotted together.

"Hold your sound arm against that branch," he commanded. "Up—up, you swine! Now keep it there."

He jumped into the magnolia tree, made fast the end of the line to the man's wrist and drew him a fathom out from the trunk. The branch was a stout one and would not bend under two men's weight, and Kettle lashed the Moor's wrist to it with a seaman's skill and then dropped lightly to the ground.

"As you can't lift your other arm to cast that adrift, you'll have to stay there till called for. I expect you'll stand at some considerable personal inconvenience, but that'll give you time to ruminate over your bad taste in trying to assassinate an innocent tourist. And now, as your fellow cut-throat mayn't have been put as soundly to sleep as appearances seem to indicate, I'll attend to him also."

He dragged the other Moor to the foot of a big cottonwood, thought for a minute, and then eased him of his *jellab*, dagger, powder-horn and headgear. Then he sat him down face to the tree with his legs straddled round the roots and, making fast one end of a *jellab* rope to one wrist, hauled up the other to it as close as it would draw and made fast again, so that the man sat nuzzling and

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cuddling the tree and perfectly impotent to release himself.

"You also," Captain Kettle announced, "have my free permission to meditate on the evilness of your deeds till I return to interrupt the chain of thought. Now I wonder how I am going to dress."

The rope of twisted white woolen fabric which the lower class Moors (and their neighbors the Berbers) wear wound in coils round the head are insecure even on themselves, and the present writer can testify it to be most exasperating wear for the ordinary white man. Either it is too tight, in which case the skull, baked by a vertical sun, seems visibly to swell; or it is too loose, and its snaky coils begin to slip adrift almost from the first moment of their readjustment.

Captain Kettle took off his coat and put on the *jellab*. The Moor does not wear trousers, or, for that matter, American boots, but the *jellab* was long and covered these, and the little sailor decided that he would feel lonely without them. Then came the turn for the elaborate headgear. He examined with care that of the Moor who was triced up to the branch of the magnolia, and proceeded to imitate its adjustment. Being a sailor, and therefore an expert in handling ropes, he made a far better attempt at it than might have been expected, but the end slipped before he had gone a mile on his way and, between slipping and readjustment, was a constant torment to him. But it is characteristic of the man that throughout all the stormy time that followed he stuck to it patiently till he mastered the trick. He refused to admit that an inferior race had skill which he could not acquire, and he refused also to appear abroad, even in the wilds of the Atlas foothills, otherwise than immaculately neat.

There were pockets inside the *jellab*, and for a while he stored uniform jacket and cap in these. But, as the desperate nature of his errand was more and more borne in upon him as he climbed the steep paths and got farther and farther into the mountains, he recognized that he would need every ounce of his wiry strength if he were to win out successful in his enterprise. It was not doing his duty to his owners to handicap himself even with the extra weight of a coat and cap of British cut, and so, with a sigh at parting with them, he stepped aside into the bush (when he came upon marks that he could remember) and hid them under a convenient slab of limestone.

But it presently began to appear that Sidi Mohammed Bergash had not spent time on the *Wongaroo* without forming a pretty shrewd estimate of her Captain's capabilities. Captain Kettle walked briskly up to the top of a rise, looked down into the valley which lay between it and the next spur of the mountains and, lo, scattered as far as the eye could reach each way were men in ones, in twos, and here and there in groups of five or six, guarding the marches.

The little sailor dropped neatly into cover and pulled vexedly at his red torpedo beard. His squat shadow sat promptly and compactly beneath him. The sun was high overhead and the day was blazing hot, and on some such baking day as this, fire had cleared the hillside below him. Even as he sat there and watched, a flaw of wind stirred up the charcoal dust and sent a small cloud of it whirling round his roped head.

"It would take me an hour," he calculated, "to get down to that line of men, and, in the meanwhile, they'd see me before I'd stepped out a dozen yards from this ridge, and would close up, ready to say how-d'ye-do all together. My holy James, but that Saint means business! That's a whole army he's got spread out down there. It's going to take me longer to arrive at the beggar's door than I'd reckoned on. Well, one thing's certain: I can't go full steam ahead till the sun's switched off again, and so I guess it'll be a sound thing to take a watch below while there's a chance."

He turned at right angles under the shelter of the ridge, and presently came across an overhanging flap of limestone, with its front marked by bush, which gave both an efficient cover from the sun, and a shield against the inspection of casual wayfarers, and under this he stretched himself luxuriously, wriggling his body down into the inequalities of the warm rock.

"I once heard a fellow say," he reminded himself drowsily, "that he could sleep upon everything except a stone floor or concrete. Well, the man didn't know the luxury of being tired. And he didn't know, either, the wisdom of storing up a good reserve stock of sleep when you get the chance. . . . I took darn good care not to leave boot tracks on those rocks. . . . And if they don't hunt me out with smell-dogs, I'm safe. . . . Miss Dubbs, my dearest, this

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isn't idleness. It means that I'm at the end of my string. . . . But don't you fret, I'll get you out. . . . and, of course, the owners, too . . . if I have to spoil half of Africa in the process."

FOR the benefit of any reader of this chronicle who does not know the upper slopes of the Atlas it may here be pointed out that the climate one finds up there is very different from the hot baking airs of the coast fringe. In the length of the Atlas which lies between the Atlantic shore and the Algerian border it is quite possible there may be glaciers and perpetual ice fields. No white man has explored them—or, to be more precise, no white man who has gone into that upper country has ever returned to report his observations, and the Berber who lives in the neighborhood, and presumably knows, is a reticent creature and will not tell.

The present writer, who records only what he has seen, has felt the sun up there drilling through his headgear at midday, and has at that time stood in the middle of his own small, circular shadow. And yet, on the same spot, and only twelve hours later, the whole camp has been whitened by steadily falling snow, and the chill of it was paralyzing. As all the world knows, there is nothing so bitter as snow in the tropics. The temperature, as temperatures go, may not be anything remarkable, but in these things it is contrast that nips.

Captain Kettle slept throughout the baking day the sleep of utter weariness, without dream, without stir. Insects hummed and pinged above him, and some of them browsed on him undisturbed. An investigating jackal got wind of him about supper-time and trotted a mile, grinning at the thought of a meal. But he turned tail after a very brief inspection, and left a bad smell behind him to mark his displeasure. The pioneers of an adjacent colony of ants, too, came and marched over him, but discovering that he was still alive, retired with a resolve to call again later on.

It was the chill that woke him.

He was stiff from head to foot, his bones ached and his skin pringled, this being the ordinary way that frost affects one in the tropics. But the sea life raises one above grumbling at trifles like these. He looked at his watch, frowned at the moon, shook himself warm, and set out. He had all his plan of campaign mapped out, and after a brief reconnaissance to make sure that the disposition of the enemy remained unchanged, he commenced the action.

He chose one of the larger pickets in the valley below where the white-clothed men lay in starfish pattern with their feet pointing toward a central camp-fire, and shouldering the Winchester, commenced a steady bombardment at the blaze. He fired no two bullets from the same spot, but after letting off one cartridge, ran swiftly for ten yards along the ridge before discharging the next. After the first few shots he was indifferent about accurate aim. The Berbers had scattered from the fire when the first bullet hit a log and sent up a rocket of sparks, and had rolled off, like the experts they were at the sniping game, into cover; and after that, a bullet at random was as good—or as harmless—as a bullet aimed.

Captain Kettle's *ruse de guerre* was to make the enemy think that they were attacked by a considerable body of riflemen strung out along the ridge, who had an order for individual fire, and in this he succeeded very pleasantly. Kettle splashed in twenty shots from a front of two hundred yards, and then there was a cessation of the firing as he sprinted back to his starting point. To the Berber this represented the interval necessary to reload and re-prime a muzzle-loading flint-locked musket. He repeated the dose over the same two hundred yards of front and convinced them that they were attacked by twenty men. Well, they were two hundred. The strung out sentries and supports had run in by this, and the whole crew of them were packed together in the bush. They were sons of Islam all, and a frontal attack appealed to them, as one of the surest short cuts to Paradise for the lucky ones.

So word was passed, and with a shout of "Allah!" they broke cover, all two hundred of them, and charged up over the burnt hillside.

CHAPTER XXXII

PIG-SHOOTING

"IF I go on much more with this sort of game," Captain Kettle panted to himself, "my boilers will need re-tubing. I never knew how near a man could get to being burst by running up hill in these high altitudes."

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He squatted behind a boulder at the head of the valley and peered over it down the bare, burnt slopes. The Berbers had carried out their frontal attack like the valiant men they were, and had scattered at the head of the ridge and were hunting for the men who had attacked them and who had so mysteriously disappeared.

"If I had the handling of you swine," the watcher mused, "I could make you into good troops. You've pluck, and that's a fact, but I think your heads are stuffed with porridge instead of brains. Well, I hope you find plenty to amuse yourselves with there for the next few hours. I shouldn't wonder but what you walk into a wild bee's nest if you rootle amongst those rocks for sufficiently long. But as you're interested, I guess it will be best for me to be jogging."

The moon kindly slid away for the time being behind clouds, and so Captain Kettle was able to pursue his passage across the head of the valley erect and in the open. The journey was not a comfortable one. An icy wind roared down from the snow-clad peaks of the Atlas above, and whistled shrewdly through the pores of his loosely woven *jellab*, and though the gloom of the night was kind enough to conceal his whereabouts from an active enemy, it also failed to show him the fissures and boulders that lay in his path, and as a consequence he stumbled severely and often. But the sailor took these minor troubles philosophically enough, munched a biscuit by way of belated supper, or early breakfast, washed it down with a nip of Horner, and held steadily along his way. From his last halt he had mapped the contours of the hills carefully with his eye, and he now checked his course by occasional squints at a pocket compass, the card of which had been annointed with luminous paint. Automatically, too, he counted his footsteps and estimated the distance traveled.

It was no labor to him to do this. He was one of those rare men to whom map-making comes by instinct. There are a handful of them in the Navy, where they are for the most part wasted, and there are said to be three in the British Army. The remaining half-dozen for the most part survey impossible places in the Himalayas where nobody wants to go, or correct portions of the bad official map of the British Isles, and send the results to publications which nobody reads.

The spurs of the Atlas at this part—*i. e.*, western end, southern flank—run more or less parallel to one another in a north and south direction. In their lower portions, before they get muddled up in the foothills which border on the Sahara plain, they are distinct enough, the top of the ridges being sharp and stony and the valleys in between broad and flat and fertile. At the upper end they run into the general scheme of the range, which is chaotic, and of course it must always be carried in mind that the whole thing is done on an enormous scale.

At the end of another four hours' rapid tramp—and the sailor had broken into a trot whenever the ground would permit the pace—he came to another divide and looked over into what was obviously the valley Bergash had talked about. The moon had retired by this time, but the clouds had gone and the sky was lit by the wonderful African stars, and the earth below them stood out like a dark photograph. The valley was not lovely; agricultural land is seldom that, but it caught the eye with an irresistible fascination. Here was the only example remaining to-day of the old Roman type of cultivation in Africa.

Irrigation was the keynote of the whole. A stream, coming from the unknown heights of the Atlas above, ran down the valley's center like a backbone. It was raised by an aqueduct a hundred feet at an average above the ground level. At constant intervals were masonry dams to catch the fertilizing flood water. Ribbed across the aqueduct, each perhaps half a mile below the one above it, were other ducts running east and west from which the water was distributed in rivulets over the fields as it was required. Infinitely simple was the scheme; intolerable must have been the amount of labor required to pile up all those enormous masses of masonry. One can imagine the rage of mischievous Moroccan Sultans when they tried to destroy it and failed; but there it stood (as it stands to-day), as perfect as when it was built in those old centuries by some soldier of fortune who had learned his art in the hard school of Imperial Rome.

But archæology was not a thing that troubled Captain Kettle at that (or any other) period of his career. He viewed the valley and its appurtenances with an inquiring eye, and was intent only on discovering a scheme which would profit his owners and

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relieve the present necessities of Miss Emily Dubbs.

The night was dark, and even the blaze of African starlight has its limit in illumination. To start with, Kettle saw no trace of the Saint's fortress which he knew ought somewhere to overhang the valley. From where he stood, it lay, as a point of fact, against a black background and was invisible even to any one who knew the countryside. Even when he descended to the floor of the valley and opened out the rock against the skyline, he had walked a good two miles among the cornfields and the irrigating channels before he discovered that it was anything more than bare rock left stranded by nature when the great bulk of the Atlas above was upreared. The two highest ambitions of that old Berber mercenary who had engineered it were that the place should be strong and that it should not be conspicuous, and to this latter end he had dovetailed his buildings into the rock and built them of stones hewn from the rock itself.

CAPTAIN KETTLE walked with head erect and ears cocked and worked his way down valley along paths that wound between the high stalks of the corn. The valley was filled for the most part with stillness, but now and again the faint sounds of moving things met his ear, and as he walked farther down these increased. There were rustlings and there were rattlings, as the tall stalks of the corn knocked against one another, and presently there was an unmistakable grunt.

"Ah," said the sailor, "a wild boar having its supper," and as he spoke the night was split with the bellow of a gun, and the valley roared with its echo.

Grunting testified a hit, but from other parts of the crops a wild stampede bore witness that the pigs were there in goodly numbers. But so, presently it seemed, were the Berbers. *Crash, bang, crash!* went the black powder in the guns; and the pebbles, the leaden slugs and the crude iron bullets with which they were loaded whistled and sang through the corn-stalks. A Berber, at the coolest of times, goes on the easy principle that no man is hit unless it is written that he should be hit, and so he is always a dangerous shooting companion. But when good, lively pigs are on the move in thick cover, then the Berber is a person to be avoided. He shoots with enthusiasm at everything that moves or rustles, and as long as his gun does not burst, he is likely to go on shooting, once he is warmed up to it, as long as his ammunition holds out.

"By James," snapped Captain Kettle angrily, "if those careless scoundrels don't look out they'll be plastering me next. The trouble is, where to move to out of their way. They're shooting all round the compass."

He crossed out of the corn-patch he was in toward another which seemed less disturbed. But as he stepped out into the path, a wild boar at the same instant seized the opportunity to dart across it. An unseen sportsman, a little farther off, was on the watch and pulled a prompt trigger. The gun blazed and roared. The assorted pellets whistled past the end of the pig's tail and drilled holes in the skirts of Captain Kettle's *jellab*, and the sailor heard the plop of a cork as the sportsman opened his powder horn to pour out a fresh charge.

The Winchester itched in Captain Kettle's hand, and that Berber missed Paradise by a narrower margin than he guessed. But in a flash came the reflection. "He doesn't know I'm me. He thought it was one of his own pals he was blazing into, and if I kick against the custom of the country and waste time with a side scrap, I shall be neglecting the owners' work I'm paid for, and neglecting Miss Dubbs. I ought," he told himself with a sigh, "to be kicked for forgetting those things even for a moment."

Once again the stalks of the corn gave him harborage, and three times more those devil-possessed swine charged in his direction and were pursued by whistling showers of pot-leg. But the luck of the adventurous stood by him, and by no contrivance of his own the little sailor came through the metallic showers unscathed.

At last the sportsmen either fired away all their powder, or decided that the pigs had escaped, and in noisy, chattering bands went away homeward down the valley. Captain Kettle followed disgustedly in their wake. "If that's sport in this country," he told himself "I'd prefer good, plain war. It's safer. Now I wonder if I can keep along at the heels of these ducks till they get close up home and then slip in through the front door whilst they are swopping lies about the bag."

But as they went on down the valley, and the great black mass of the fortress rock

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loomed higher and bigger against the Milky Way, even Captain Kettle's brazen self-assurance began to be streaked with hesitation. This was not some cluster of tumble-down huts belonging to a handful of robbers and perched on an easy crag that a bird's-nesting boy could scale. Dislike for Sidi Mohammed Bergash had made him believe that the man bragged when he told about his ancestral stronghold, and here when it came to the point, the fellow had told a good deal less than the truth. It was a fortress indeed, and measuring thoughtfully with his eye, Kettle reckoned that it might well be packed with as many as eight or ten thousand people. The sailor was a man of brazen courage, but he was no madman; he had ordinary human prudence, and he saw that to march into this great hive of enemies would be an end to his usefulness. This must be a case for strategy, and for the present he must keep clear of the fortress walls, till he knew more about the lay of the land and its possibilities.

When they came up to the rock the Berbers bore off to the right, working up a steep rise of the ground to where the causeway came out on to the edge of the spur. Kettle left them when they turned, and went himself to the left, keeping close in to the edge of the little scree of fallen fragments which fringed the foot of the rock, and craning his neck backward so as to take in every foot of the face. He did not in the least expect to find a row of crevices or ledges by which he could climb to the top; he by this time was very thoroughly impressed by the accuracy with which the Saint and his predecessors in the saintship had kept up their defenses; but he had, as I have pointed out before, a very clever eye for the detail of a countryside, and so he examined it automatically and stored up mental notes of what he saw without effort.

CHAPTER XXXIII

UNDER THE ROCK

IN THIS manner then he made a complete circuit of the rock as far as the other side of the entrance causeway, and having so far noted nothing of any interest, and having also found no hiding-place for himself, he turned back again to make a fresh examination, and this time increased his speed. Time was getting of value; dawn impended; and if he was caught in the open when day dawned, even though hidden amongst the corn, he would be within easy range of any inquiring eye that looked down from the fortress above, and subsequently a simple target for the crudest marksman.

Nowhere could he have picked more unpromising ground for finding a hiding-place than the skirts of this great island of stone. The rock slabs which formed the sides either by nature or by chiseling were as smooth as the sides of a house. Nothing but a lizard could have climbed them. And they would not have offered cover for a fly. A clump of red balerian here and there, or a tuft of purple aubretia, broke the sameness of the wall at rare intervals; but these offered no foothold, and indeed only tended to accentuate the steepness and the height of the great rock faces.

An owl whizzed in from the valley, swung past Captain Kettle's head and then swooped upward and disappeared.

"Got a nest there, that fowl," he thought. "Or a roosting-place. There's been a bit of a fall of rock here, the outside's shelled off—I wonder——"

He ran out briskly into the plain and stared hard at the face of the rock. The night was thinning. Already the east was gray. Day would stare at him within a matter of minutes, and if he was to find cover, it must be before day showed him to the curious. Yes, in the edge of that rock-fall there was a dark patch which might well be a hollow. There was a darker stain at the foot of it which merged into green below, and meant a trickle of wet. It would be damp and uncomfortable in the hollow even if he could get into it, but he was in no position just then to pick and choose. He must take what offered, and if it turned out that the dark patch was merely shadow, and not a hole at all, well, there was no getting over the fact that his position would be desperate. So he ran in once more, clambered up over the tumbling screes, and then with finger and toes attacked the narrow ledges of the rock itself.

He told me afterward it was the first piece of rock climbing he had done in all his life, and from the description (and he was never a man to exaggerate), it must have been no kind of work for an apprentice. But on the other hand it must be remembered that he had learned to climb on a

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sailing ship, and later had been second mate on a full rigger, and from his official position had been expected to be (and was) the most reckless and skilful climber on board. This training, one may gather, saved his life just then. He went up, he crawled sideways, he went down, and clambered up again, with straining finger-tips; and finally got to the middle of a fractureless slab of rock and had to give up and go down and start afresh.

He prospected more diligently this time, traced a course, plotted it in his head and attacked it with toes and fingers. This time he had more success. Daylight was flogging at his heels, and he strove upward with every muscle and nerve in his body. But the way was almost vertical and terribly hard. The jealous inches yielded to him reluctantly. The owl, for the first time in its history, scented an intruder, and came out to the edge of its hole and hooted derisively.

Kettle halted ten seconds for breath, and nodded at it pleasantly. "I'll tweak your tail feathers yet—before the day comes up," he gasped—"if only you'll wait for me." And then up he dragged himself hand over hand for six feet till once more he could find no lodgment for the toes of his boots. And then came triumph. He put out a hand high above his head and got it in a firm hold. A second later he was in the place where his hand had been, and the owl, complaining noisily, flew outward past his ear.

For a while Captain Kettle lay on the floor of the cleft, getting back his breath in labored sobs. The valley below him was eclipsed. His only view was on snow-capped peaks at a far distance, rosy now with an unseen sunrise, and a limitless sky spread with the palette of the dawn. He looked and lusted. "My James!" he muttered, "if only I'd time to get you down on paper!"

But he was never a man to allow himself the luxuries of poetry when business still remained to be done. The cleft ran into the mountain; a stream tinkled at its foot; and it flashed upon him that here was a place to ambush the *Wongaroo's* men if so be he found it necessary to bring a squad of those all-nation ruffians up to the valley. All evidences showed that the cleft had been but newly opened. The rock slab that sealed its mouth had shelled away and tumbled down on to the screes below, only a matter of weeks before, perhaps days. And the enterprising owl which had taken possession had not yet had time to build more than the rudiments of a nest, much less lay the impending egg. The main question was, would the cleft hold enough men?

The hollow in which he lay and panted would harbor half a dozen at a pinch—if they could get there. He rose to his feet and pressed on to the gloom at its farther end. The crack went on into the rock, and the stream murmured up into the black distance; but the rock walls drew together and Kettle could not press even his slim body in between them.

A draught came out of a crack with the water and blew its grateful chill into his perspiring face. He unwound the irritating head-rope, and removed the head-cloth to get the full benefit of it and—no—yes—surely there was another draught blowing down from above! He shut his eyes tightly, and then peered upward into the gloom. Yes, there was a hole above him!

He pressed his toes, knees and elbows into the rock walls and heaved himself up, chimney-sweep fashion, and presently stood in a channel above, which appeared to lead directly in toward the heart of the rock. He had matches, but they were few in number and he did not want to waste them. So he went ahead into the darkness, exploring cautiously with hands and feet, and after taking the glass from his compass with the point of his knife, took bearings of direction from time to time by delicate finger touches on the bare needle. It was a nice piece of work, carried out by a remarkably clever surveyor.

The cleft he was now in was an old water channel, now dry, which had broken through in places to a newer water channel below. It was level in floor and roof, smooth in sides, and for the most part beyond his reach in width, though here and there it contracted into a waist. These narrows were never too straight for navigation. And so he came on till the cleft abruptly ended in tooled masonry, and a path (on testing) proved itself to fork off at right angles and up a steep incline.

"I reckon," said Kettle, "that this puzzle earns a match, though I hate to waste one: So here she goes, and the Lord grant the box isn't wet!"

The match gleamed out with astonishing radiance. Kettle cupped his hand behind

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it as a reflector, and peered ahead. The path rose sharply; it was just about as steep as one could walk on without holding on to the sides. It ran (the compass told him) due northwest, and within the range of the match-light he saw it turn at right angles, and the commencement of another incline that ran northeast.

"My Great James!" said Captain Kettle. "Here's more of that infernal Saint's fairy-story coming true. This is the well his forbears dug in the middle of the castle square when they were besieged and had a bit of spare time on their hands. A dozen feet or so every hundred years, wasn't it? Also, the air was bad; well, that's a lie anyway. The air here's as sweet as gin. Wait a bit, though. What about the hole I got in at? That's new. What prevents that giving ventilation for the first time when the outside cake of stone shelled off only perhaps a week ago? I believe that's the very ticket, and the bad air's another piece of truth to the blackguard's credit. The water's in a sump at the bottom all right, and that trickle down the crack is just the overflow.

"The only question is about that last hundred feet at the top. If that's laddered, well, here's as neat a back way in as any quiet-minded man could wish to find. But if they operated it with a rope and windlass, and the rope's pulled up, why then I guess I'm as far away as I was at the foot of the rock itself. However, I'm not likely to find printed sailing directions, and there's only one way to make sure, and that's go-look-see. So here's for the trip."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SAINT PROPOSES

"I TELL you it's no use the girl trying further," said Miss Dubbs. "I've not learned four words from her since I came here, and it's my belief I never shall. I never had any talent for languages, Mr. Bergash. I don't know whether you are aware of it, but I am the daughter of a minister, and no expense was spared on my education. Papa arranged that I should take French as an extra at school for two whole terms, and though I honestly did apply, if you'll believe me, I really can't *parlez vous* a bit better now than many another lady that's not had half my advantages."

Sidi Mohammed Bergash laughed. "My dear girl, I didn't expect you to learn Arabic—or the Berber dialect that we are pleased to call Arabic here in the Atlas—in a matter of four short days. But if you stuck to it for three months you'd be able to get along passably, and at the end of a year you'd speak it as easily as you do your own mother tongue. Let me tell you English is a far harder language to pick up, and when I first went down from here I didn't know a solitary word of it. But I believe I speak your tongue pretty fluently now."

"You speak it far better than many gentlemen I know. Except that you've a different voice, which is perhaps due to your brown beard and mustaches, you speak it as well as Sir George, and he belongs to one of our oldest families."

The Saint waved away the compliment with a slim hand. "I speak my English as I was taught by those I came among. Given a decent memory and an adequate larynx any one can speak any language with any chosen accent. You'll find that out presently when you really begin to try. I hope they are making you pretty comfortable in other ways."

Miss Dubbs pursed her lips. "I can never get to like sleeping on the floor for one thing."

"I'm awfully sorry; I forgot. We're rather creatures of custom here, and we've chosen to sleep on a mat on the ground for the last four thousand years. But I'll see that the carpenters build you a proper bedstead before to-night. I used to have one myself when I first came down here from Cambridge, but it created prejudice, and I gave it up. One soon slips back to the old ways. But you see I stuck to my chair and table and the rest of it."

"And your pictures."

"Yes, those are Cambridge groups. See the Trinity Hall shield on the top? Look rather incongruous here, don't they? I played cricket quite a bit up there, but our first eleven was pretty hot stuff, and I didn't get my colors till my third year. I was tried for the 'Varsity all the same."

"Isn't that—yes it is; there's his name underneath—J. B. Hartman. Well I never!"

"Why, do you know him?"

"In a way, as you may say, I did. He used to stay in Foston just after I first left school and went into the business."

"I never suspected Hartman of business tastes."

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"Perhaps he hadn't. He was yachting when he came to us."

"Stayed with you, d'you mean?"

"At our hotel, the Mason's Arms. I was the bar lady."

Sidi Mohammed ran an appreciative blue eye over Miss Dubbs' elaborate black hair, her full color, her deep bust, her well-rounded form. He laughed shortly. "It's a wonder you've escaped marriage so long."

"Getting married is a matter of taste. But in my case, Mr. Bergash, I can assure you it's not been for want of opportunities. I've had my offers. And though to be sure, us ladies in our profession do have more admirers than most, being as you may say brought into contact with a great many gentlemen every day of our lives, I can tell you plain I know I've only had to nod at least a dozen times and I could have settled down, and a house of my own, within three months. But I preferred my liberty. And do still."

"A girl with your attractions ought to make a great marriage."

"Oh, I don't undervalue myself. But I don't intend to get married. So we'll please change the subject, and as you've been inquisitive, I'll be the same. Is that basin on my toilet-table made of tin?"

"I haven't seen it, but anyway I can guarantee the thing is not tin. Tin doesn't grow here. If it's white metal——"

"It is."

"Then it's silver. Why?"

"A silver wash-basin! My! you do have some style. And the carafe and tooth-mug, are they brass?"

"Well, if you corner me, I'll have to suggest they're gold. Why? Do they taste, or something? Aren't they clean?"

Miss Dubbs looked at her host with a new respect. "I thought only royalty had gold and silver toilet-ware?"

"I believe it's more the rule among American millionaires. But if you insist on the point, I suppose we can qualify all right. We really are kings in our way, and if you come to think of it our ancestors were reigning kings here in the Atlas when yours were running about Great Britain discussing the latest tint in blue paint."

"You needn't be indelicate."

"You shouldn't draw me on into bragging comparisons, then. How would you like to live here? Look through the window. You can't beat that view in all the world."

"A lady can't live on view alone," said Miss Dubbs shrewdly. "And for a gentleman who has been to college at Cambridge your idea of comfort strikes me as incomplete. You give me a silk carpet to my room, and the floor's like a rough stone road underneath it; you put a gold-backed hand-glass on the table, but not a bit of paper on the walls; and you've got a yellow-metal lamp, inlaid with what looks like real jewels, hanging from the ceiling, and not so much as a single pane of glass in the window."

"That's Berber custom. If I had an English wife it could be changed."

"And whilst she was at it (if you'll excuse me mentioning it) she might look after the cooking. I don't mind things a bit greasy, but really that Irish stew which is your mamma's favorite dish just swims with fat sometimes. And you ought to do something to the dairy. I don't call butter tasty when it smells like what they serve here."

THE Kaid beat the table with his fist. "Now you," he said, "take the practical view, and that's what I like. You don't talk a lot of tommyrot about poetry, and the pride of high place, and the responsibilities of rule, and other things that I know about just as well myself; but you've an eye for essential facts, and the wit to point out cures for what is wrong. I call pumping up poetry the worst kind of skittles."

"Well, there I disagree with you. I can't make poetry myself, but a gentleman friend of mine can make the most beautiful verses that were ever read or written; yes, and set them to music, and play them to his own accordion accompaniment; and yet he's the most business-like and practical gentleman I ever met. No, never mind who he is. That doesn't matter. I was only telling you about him to prove that poetry doesn't always drag a man down to long hair and a velvet coat. And that reminds me; we're here alone, and perhaps you won't mind telling. Of course I'll keep it confidential, but are you really a Sidi?"

"I'm the genuine article."

"Meaning Saint?"

"That's it. Beware of imitations. Insist on having the one and only original."

"But some one told me—I mean I was told that one always addressed a Mohammedan gentleman in Algeria as 'Si' or 'Sidi,' just as we say 'Mister'."

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"That's perfectly correct, and I'd like to bet you a pair of gloves I could name your informant."

"Well, I won't bet. But it was Captain Kettle."

"Precisely. He's tried to throw doubt on everything about me, from A to Z. I wonder why the man detests me so heartily."

Miss Dubbs laughed. She had, as a rule, a fine, deep laugh that it was really a pleasure to listen to, but just now her laughter was forced, and it grated. "I should say the reason's perfectly clear. You cut him out with his young lady."

"How do you mean?"

"After you turned up with your tale of being a Saint and all that, Miss Chesterman would barely so much as look at the Captain. Why, till you came, I looked upon them as good as engaged."

"Did you, indeed? About that saintship; it's genuine enough. If I were to die to-night my people would put up a nice, neat tomb down in the valley there, with square corners and a round, domed top, and they'd drop attending at the late Saint's tomb, and come and say their prayers at mine."

"And who was the late Saint?"

"My father, to be sure. I follow on whether I like it or not, and the people are annoyed with me because I show no present signs of providing a successor to myself. They say it's time I had a queen."

Miss Dubbs looked out over the fertile valley. "A queen!" she murmured.

"That's the idea. But, of course, that doesn't interest you."

"And why not?"

"Because—well, because you are engaged, aren't you?"

"To whom, pray?"

"Kettle—so I gathered."

Miss Dubbs put back her shoulders and showed the whole of her splendid height and figure. "I'd scorn to deceive you, Mr. Bergash—or I should say, Saint. I was engaged to the Captain, once. But it was a mistake, both on his part and on mine, and it's over and done with. I wouldn't marry him now at any price; no, not if he was to come down on his bended knees to me; no, nor even if he was to ask me on paper. If any lady's seen the foolishness of marriage, without going so far as to have her finger burned with a ring, it's me. That's straight. You can look upon me as an old maid, and glad of it. No, Mr. Saint, there's no marrying on any condition for yours truly."

"I can imagine that being a wife to a man who's away at sea nine-tenths of the time, and staying behind on a narrow income, would be an over-rated amusement."

"It would be all right," snapped Miss Dubbs, "if the man was the right man."

"Oh, I quite agree with you—so long as the novelty of it lasted. Only don't you think that the old saying about romance is pretty true?"

"Which old saying?"

"Why, that romance flies out of the window when there are not enough dollars on the hearth to keep it warm. Mark you, I'm only theorizing—or, to be more accurate, quoting theory. For myself, I've always been one of those very ordinary men who never know what it is to be otherwise than well off. I've always had more money than I knew how to spend, and more servants than I could keep amused, and more power than I really knew what to do with. Ever try power, Miss Dubbs? Ever occur to you that in my small kingdom up here I'm the most Absolute Monarch now reigning on earth?

"I'm the high justice, the middle and the low. If I took the richest of my subjects this afternoon, or the poorest, and cut off his head and put into my own house the uttermost of his possessions, do you think anybody would object? Not a solitary man, woman or child of them! If, tomorrow morning, I called out every man among my subjects between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and led them against the Sultan of Morocco—or say the *Wongaroo*—led them, if you like, to what they knew would be certain death, do you think there would be a question asked or an objection raised? Not one. Oh, I tell you, there are no modern ideas of the people's rights among the Berbers of the Atlas. They are firmly imbued with the idea that they merely remain alive for the earthly honor and the heavenly delight of serving a Saint, and I haven't it in me to teach them anything different."

"You ought to be happy."

"I OUGHT. I believe I should be, if my father had not made that one fatal blunder of sending me to England for my education. It was good for the tribe; I admit that. But it has just been hell for me. After I have seen English

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women like yourself, who are free practically as men, who ride, dance, play tennis, write books, ride to hounds, how could I marry a woman of my own people who has been brought up behind a veil and thinks it immoral to know how to read and write or to have an idea of her own?"

"I must say, I think the way your ladies tattoo the tops of their noses disgusting."

"And if you like, there's that also. I couldn't sit down for the rest of my life opposite a Mrs. Bergash with her family coat of arms tattooed in wavy lines across her face. I thought nothing of it once, but now I simply couldn't do it. And that, I'll trouble you, is only one result of Cambridge."

"But wouldn't your people be annoyed if you went outside the district for the lady who is to be your wife?"

"Annoyed with me? They don't know the meaning of the word. As I have tried to tell you, their creed is that they are graciously permitted to be on earth for the one and only purpose of doing their Saint's will. And besides, it has almost always been a custom with us Kaids to go abroad for our wives. The record's carved upon the stone of one of the rooms below, and I'll show it you, if you like. We can't read a lot of the earlier inscriptions. But one of the more recent queens was a Phenician; two more were Carthaginians; one was bought from that bigamous old sweep, Solomon, as the price for a Barbary lion; several were Roman, in Rome's prime; then there were Visigoths, and Huns, and Iberians, and a Norse girl, and some French. Two were English, taken from ships by some of our people who went a-raiding from Sallee. My grandmother was daughter of a Spanish Consul in Mogador."

"But your mother?"

"She is a pure-blooded Berber. My father was the exception to our rule. And, moreover, he loved her. As I do also."

"I'm sure she's a very pleasant lady, though I must admit that she strikes me as foreign."

The Kaid laughed. "She would. But you've seen her here; you've been about with her into other houses on the rock. Did she leave any doubt in your mind as to who was Queen?"

"She did not." Miss Dubbs shivered. "I don't speak Berber of course, and I don't understand a lot that goes on, but I rather thought she ordered one lady we called on to be flogged."

"I'm not supposed to know what goes on behind the curtain, and I make a point of not knowing. But I'll admit, if you like, that it's quite possible. My mother prides herself on keeping up the old Berber tradition, and, anyway, she's great on discipline. She's every inch a queen."

"Well," said Miss Dubbs pointedly, "all I can say is you'd better not let your Miss Violet Chesterman know. At the same time I'll trouble you not to scowl at me like that. You'll kindly remember that I'm a lady and intend to be treated as such."

With an effort Sidi Mohammed Bergash did not beat the table. "I should have thought it would have occurred to you by this time that I am not altogether a man to be fooled with. We will leave Miss Chesterman out of the conversation, if you please."

"Then the conversation, so far as I am concerned, will end."

"Not at all. If you wish me to explain, I will do so. I brought Miss Chesterman and her brother here as a means to an end."

"Precisely."

"You say precisely. Then you recognize that it was to bring you here, Emily, that I used them!"

"I recognize nothing of the sort! And you will please remember that my name to you, and, for that matter, to everybody else, is Miss Dubbs."

"For the present, if you like, Miss Dubbs it shall be. For the future we shall see. In the meanwhile, I have the honor to offer you marriage."

"What, you want to marry me?"

"As you have known perfectly well all along. Now, come, my dear girl, let us look facts in the face. You are piqued for the moment and raw (if you like) from a trivial disappointment. From your own telling the *affaire* Kettle was only one of many."

"It was nothing of the kind."

"Well, have it your way. But your engagement with him is at an end. Now look at what I can offer you—lands, houses, servants, wealth, power. Did you ever think of the sweets of absolute sway, Emily? You will be a Queen, with power of life and death over all your subjects, and if I know your capacity, I shall be one of those subjects also. You will want an English girl as companion; I give you Miss Chesterman. If you wish for a large kingdom, I will conquer

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it for you. Everything that power can get and love can think of, will be yours. And please remember this: I have loved you from the first moment I put eyes on you, and determined then to make you my Queen if love could do it."

Miss Dubbs stood up and looked steadily down into the man's blue eye. "I'm sorry you've spoken," she said. "But you'll give me credit for trying to head you off from proposing."

"I know that, but I'd too much at stake to take your hint. Besides, I wanted to lay out fairly before you what I have to offer."

"I would rather you did not go on, because there can only be one answer, and that's 'no.' There could be no lady more conscious of the compliment you have paid me, Saint, and the offer to make me a Queen is, of course, extremely fascinating. But marrying's a thing I'm set against, and there you have the whole tale in a nutshell. I should like, if you would let me, to regard you always as a very close friend, but it will never get beyond that. And now it would be more comfortable for both of us if you changed the subject."

"No." The Berber chief's blue eyes grew hard, and his brown beard stuck out aggressively. "I have offered you the easy path, Emily, and I have made my proposal to you on honorable English lines. But there is too much at stake to let you upset all my schemes for the sake of a paltry whim. To this valley and this rock you have come, and here you will stay for the rest of your natural life. Make no mistake about that! Again I ask: will you be Queen?"

"I'd rather die first!" said Miss Dubbs shortly.

"You can guess the alternative?"

"I prefer to remember that you are a gentleman with an English education, and, that, therefore, you won't make threats."

"It would be better if you made no allusion to the unfortunate circumstance of my upbringing. I can tell you it has been the curse of my existence, and the detail of my gentility is beginning to wear very thin. At present, Emily, I am supreme Kaid of the Western Atlas Berbers, with power of life and death and fortune over everything within my marches, and am in no mood to be thwarted!" The blue eyes gazed hungrily on the English girl's splendid womanhood. "So you can be assured of just one broad fact. My wife you are going to be, and it would be more comfortable for both of us if you came to me willingly."

"That I never will."

"Then I will leave you for the time being to think out for yourself the obvious alternatives. I am sure when you have conned over the matter coolly, you will take the sensible view. You are an essentially level-headed girl, Emily, and I believe it is that which attracted me to you at the first. I will go now. And I will come back for your favorable decision at ten o'clock to-night."

CHAPTER XXXV

CAPTAIN KETTLE DISPOSES

SIDI MOHAMMED BERGASH once told Sir George Chesterman that tradition of the Atlas said the architect who built the campanile in Saint Mark's Square at Venice was a Berber, and that he got his idea for the inclined footways of that much overrated bell-tower from the mode of descent to the siege-well in his ancestral fortress. The legend may or may not be true, but anyway it is plausible, and except that the man at Venice turned the idea inside out, and from a well evolved a tower, and incidentally eased the angles of the inclines, the plans of the two works are identical.

Captain Kettle felt that he could not afford matches, and, after the day had passed, explored the slopes in the inky dark. So, as I have only his report to go upon, details will for the most part be lacking in this memoir. The cut was only a trifle over four feet wide, so he could easily keep a hand on each wall, and having all of a sailor's distrust for navigation in strange waters, he always took a careful sounding with his advance foot and assured himself that the floor was in place, before putting weight on it. There are such things as winzes in these inclined shafts, and Captain Kettle did not propose to walk into eternity unawares, if ordinary precaution could keep him alive and useful.

Of course, as he foresaw, the critical bit was the last hundred feet, which, as the Saint had told, the old sinkers had driven vertically. It is easy to be wise after the event, but really if Captain Kettle had been the slenderest student of archæology his qualms on this point would have been at rest. The windlass is a comparatively

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modern machine, and the sinking of that first hundred feet of well-shaft had antedated it by certainly ten, and very possibly twenty centuries. The only methods known to the ancients of hoisting spoil from vertical workings was in skin bags made fast to two, three or even five rawhide ropes, each manned by its own hauling crew. This was expensive in labor and (owing to the chafe on the well-lip) in ropes also, and therefore it was avoided as much as possible. Only in rare instances were the workers hauled up vertical shafts. For the most part they climbed up by notched chicken ladders set diagonally, though in the very early times when shafts measured two-foot-nine by four-foot-three as a standard all the world over, they climbed up by means of foot pockets set opposite one another on the two longer sides.

The engineer who in the year B. C. 709 had planned the Bergash well probably hoped to strike water within the first hundred feet. When he was disappointed in this he did not proceed straight away to sinking in inclines from the bottom of his 100-foot level. That would have entailed difficulty in hoisting his spoil. So, being a thoughtful man, he put down another set of inclines from the surface to the hundred-foot level, so that all rock mined below could be carried direct by baskets or skin bags to daylight without once having to be hauled by the rope men. I have often wondered, by the way, whether they did this work by driving it overhand from below. Of course upraises—but this is a technical point which has little bearing on this memoir of Captain Owen Kettle and Miss Emily Dubbs.

If Captain Kettle had tried to climb the 100-foot vertical finish to the well-shaft, he would have been met at the upper end (although of course he did not know this) by a solid door of three-inch oak held down by perhaps a foot of the gravel which floored one of the courtyards of the fortress. But at the foot of this vertical shaft he paused, fingering the footholds and recruiting his breath; and while engaged in these easy employments, fancied he felt a draught in the neighborhood of his left ear.

His right ear was facing the incline up which he had ascended, and his left ear (so he had imagined in the dark) was close to the solid rock. In order that there should be no doubt about it, he wetted a finger and held it up. The finger chilled most distinctly on the left side. There was a draught, and therefore another passage to somewhere.

He lit one of his precious matches and discovered the entrance to the farther set of inclines of which I have spoken, and which the Saint had never mentioned and (as it turned out) had never heard of. And it was up these, walking and not climbing, that Kettle made his entrance to the fortress.

Some time ago, when during some forgotten siege, work on the bottom incline had finally struck water and the well was pronounced complete, the surface end was walled up and furnished with a door. This was somewhere about 750 or 780 A.D. The well has not been used much since, because of its propensity for harboring carbon dioxide, and so far as I can make out the door has only been opened during five of the fortress' many sieges. They have rock-cut rain-water cisterns which supply everyday use, and anything up to a five years' siege.

Of course the door has been renewed a good many times since then, because even white oak from the mid-Atlas ranges lasts only a bare eighty years when it is fully exposed to the weather. But the same type of ponderous, complicated, wooden Berber key has been used during all the centuries to shoot the wooden bolt in the marvelous wooden lock, and it is officially supposed to occupy a nail in the Kaid's treasure vault, and probaby hangs there to this day. The only drawback to these old locks is that they are entirely open on the inside, and even without wasting a match over the process Kettle was able to lift the tumblers one by one with his fingers, and pull the cobweb-clogged bolt out of its socket. The massive oak door was inclined to scream on its vertical pivots. But when it was dragged open a sixty-fourth on an inch at a pull, with a neat boot pressed against the inside to steady it, this complaining sound was reduced to the merest murmur. And when the gap was wide enough, Captain Kettle stepped out into the full smell of an active mistal.

TWO lady cows scented him simultaneously, and snuffled him with moist noses, and presently diagnosing him as a stranger, plunged backward against their head ropes.

"Coosh! coosh!" said Kettle soothingly, and the cows, not knowing that British term

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of endearment, plunged harder to the right hand and to the left. The sailor was annoyed at his lack of agricultural charm, but took advantage of the fair-way and made swift passage to the rear. Moonlight glimmered in through an arrow-slit and he grasped the elementary fact that the mistal held another building above its sturdy arches.

His eyes, after their long training in the black darkness of the inclines, acted readily in this gentle gloom. He made quick circuit of the walls and found a door; opened it and saw a street; peered up and down that and discovered it to be empty; and then ran out to the opposite wall and looked upward. He saw a big house above the cow-stable, built of massive stone blocks and narrowly windowed. None of the windows was glazed and most were in darkness. But three were lit and from one of these came voices. He thrilled to his innermost nerve as one of the voices reached him, and with it a faint smell of frangipanni—and was within an ace of calling out that he was near, and armed, and full of fight, and ready to upset half the available world to bring assistance. He had the words "Miss Dubbs" on the edge of his lips when common prudence drummed into him that there were ten thousand men within call, and if he wanted to be useful he must employ wit and not common vulgar valor. He searched the wall of the big house for its main entrance door, found it, ran across, opened and entered.

Within was a most exasperating warren of passages and stairs. There seemed to be no ordinary human plan, no method, in the architecture of that Berber interior. There were steep stairs and narrow stairs, passages on the level and passages on the incline, straight passages and others that wound in figure of eight. Also, although the inside partition walls were eight to ten feet thick, the whole house seemed full of the murmur and whisper of voices and warm with human occupation and savory with the smell of cooking.

It was all unnerving enough to the amateur, but Captain Owen Kettle was a man of brazen nerve. He resolutely pushed a black rifle-muzzle ahead of him and went on with his exploration without any acceleration to his heart-beats. He had turned so many times that, in spite of his sea training for courses, he was frankly lost in the maze of alleys and arches. Three times he thought he had hit upon the right room and listened at a nail-studded door and heard only the twitter of foreign speech. But at last he came to a narrow window which looked upon the street he had recently left, and from that he got his bearings.

He turned sharply to his left, burst into an anteroom—and found it empty. But he was on the right track now. Miss Dubbs' full, rich contralto was giving forth strong opinions from close at hand.

Kettle turned to the door behind him and shut it, and, finding a heavy bronze bolt, shot that into its stone socket. Then once more he pressed ahead.

The next room was a surprise to him. The voices had stopped for the moment and he looked about him in wonder. On the walls were photographs of English cricket elevens in flannels, association football teams in their quaint attire, and groups of self-conscious young men in straw hats and weird, ill-cut tweeds, all framed in oak and surmounted by gaudy coats of arms in colors. There were English tobacco pipes and Moorish sabers, yellow-backed novels and a yard-long British post-horn, a fox's mask and a stale copy of the *Sporting Times*—in this amazing room. On a side table among ash-trays was a heavy .450 Hopkins Allen revolver. Captain Kettle picked it up, found it to be loaded, and put it in one of the pockets of his *jellab* for future reference. And at that moment the voice of Miss Dubbs crying out in terror thrilled him in a way he had never been stirred before.

There was another doorway to the room, hidden by a drapery. He dashed through this and saw the girl struggling in Sidi Mohammed Bergash's arms.

TO BE CONCLUDED

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The Bonehead's Pretty Salleen

by John Lewis

"YES, sir, Gold; that fat lollop of a Potter person yonder has got to pay fer them there casual but bitter remarks. He calls me a bonehead, an' nothin' short o' th' ultimate gurgle of his financial heart's blood erases th' blot."

Five years' acquaintance with Alchemar Ajax Bunson told me he was in mood belligerent. The inner tube of his proud spirit was pricked, and I had been attempting with patches of mucilaginous words to prevent an explosion which I felt sure would leave nothing but a loud report and a pair of miner's boots of what had once been a fairly relevant and competent prospector.

"Well, doesn't all Lucky Lode call you Bonehead Bunson, and with cause, since you sold the Last Red Cent for a hundred and twenty dollars and a phonograph, and that mine running two hundred and fifty gold to the ton right now?"

But the tire trouble in the wheels of Alchemar was not to be repaired by a mere verbal jacking-up from me. He gazed gloomily at me through a truculent fringe of red hair that hung athwart a narrow forehead and over watery, lashless eyes. And sulkily he shook that crisis of his physical being which had won him the name of Bonehead, although some who knew him claimed the designation was complimentary, and that, instead of being solid bone, his cupola was really reinforced concrete.

We were sitting in the Fashion saloon at a wobbly affair our trusting natures accepted as a table, but which was really such a fretful and nervous apology that it served only to increase the revenue of the bar by spilling most of the quicklime mixture a larcenous proprietor asserted was rye highball.

Before he answered my argument, Bunson drew a few death's-heads and crossbones on the wet table, presumably under the impression that the prophets spoke through his lank forefinger and he was depicting final scenes for Williston Philander Potter, his traducer. The latter at the moment stood at the far side of the room trying to give the bar as loving an embrace as his short arms and girthy thickness would permit.

Surveying with approval his moist but artistic prophecy and throwing a malicious glance at his corpulent defamer, the Bonehead snarled:

"Yes, sir, I did all that, Gold, but how in a desert —— was I to know th' Last Red Cent would pan out anything but a myth? All I did was drill a hole, set off a shot an' let out an exultant whoop. I thought a hundred an' twenty a fair price fer powder squandered, an' I figured that there phonygraph clear velvet; an' say, Gold, that's a stavin' good phony——"

"Don't blame folks for calling you Bonehead, then," I interrupted.

"I don't, Gold," Bunson replied, as he fingered his red thatch with a freckled hand. "But this yere Potter behemoth ain't folks. He's a pedestrianistic insult—that's him. Look what he says: 'Bunson! Why, Bunson's a bonehead. He doesn't know pay

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dirt f'om floor sweepings. He should prospect his anatomical summit fer buttons, dice and knife-handles.' That's what he says."

"Well, we've all got nicknames here in Lucky Lode," says I, still trying to appease the flinty-roofed Bunson. For I feared his ingrowing grouch would reach the point where it would be hymns and obsequies for Potter, and the best we could do in the casket line for one of his bulk would be a piano-box from the general store.

"Sure, we've got nicknames in this town —that is, anybody as is anybody," argues the Bonehead, as stirred up as a hog-wallow after a rain. "But we don't mean no disrespect when we uses 'em. You call me Bonehead, an' then buy me a drink, which latter shows your *savoir vivre*, as you dead-language experts put it. I call you Gold, thereby stealing th' initials off your suit-case that there day five years ago when you animates into th' Noble House, whereas your unabridged monaker is Geoffrey Osmer Laurence Denham, you bein' part o' th' annual result o' th' Boston Technical Institute, an' an engineer who can tell a mine-sump f'om a pack-mule with one hand tied behind you. Then there's Smiley Pete, 'cause of him gettin' grinnin' drunk, an' Faro Ed an' Bert th' Bunk, an' Copper-face. But we mean it playful when we retreats onto them names. This man Potter—this Tub Potter—uses my name o' Bonehead in a way derisive an' with malice!"

AND, really, Alchemar Ajax Bunson had cause for complaint. During his two months' sojourn in Lucky Lode, W. Philander Potter's vocabulary had been a shock and reproach. It was due only to the fact that we carried gentle and tolerant guns that his ample hide had not been transformed into an overgrown colander.

In form and figure W. Philander resembled a capable water-tank adorning a pair of stilts. His face was the color of a fatigued saddle and his protruding eyes had a surprised and startled look as though they were being spilled out of his head. His fat cheeks hung down below his jowls like the skin on an elephant's hind leg.

But appearances would not have been held against Potter had he not disported such a fresh and flippant tongue. Lucky Lode, situated in Arizona on the off side of the Great American Desert and at the junction of the roads to Hopeless Despair and Bitter Anguish, extended a joyful welcome to all newcomers until they showed their hands.

Potter had about played out his welcome and his hand showed not a face-card. His superior way and lordly air, coupled with insulting speech, had made him in the eyes of Lucky Lode a human grievance and a social impossibility. Not even Matt the Mex or Texas Beecham, town Ishmaels though they were, yearned for the man's society. Potter drank alone, which condition is the bottomless pit of Southwestern ostracism.

"Yes, sir," continued the Bonehead, going after the dregs of his high-ball, "it's th' way he says it. When I hears him it's like a stingin' lizard's bit me. I ought to prospect fer buttons, dice an' knife-handles! Well, what do you think would show if they'd prospect *his* fat head? I know. Nothin' but oleemargarine, an' a bum grade at that."

"Why don't you shoot him up a whole lot, then, or bend a gun over his head?" says I, getting tired of the Bonehead's plaint and willing to risk the piano-box coffin. "Go over there and call him a liar, and then send a .45 slug prospecting around in his innermost thoughts, if he has any."

"No, no, Gold," answered the Bonehead, rising and drawing himself up to his full height of five feet four. "I'm constitutionally opposed t' violence, blood an' th' mussy stuff. But this land hippopotamus insults me an' I'm goin' to commit manslaughter on his worldly funds an' go through his financial status like a pestilence. He makes what you midnight-oil squanderers call a *fox's paw* when he lets loose that 'buttons, dice an' knife-handle' talk. Five words them. Ten thousand dollars a word it costs this Potter hulk."

"How do you lay out to accomplish the feat, Bunson?" I asked, almost afraid to use the Bonehead appellation for fear I also might have to pay under the little man's revised high-cost-of-living schedule.

"Never mind, Gold; you've been through college an' wear a frat.-pin where I sport a photo button of an auburn-haired girl who lives back in th' land o' my fathers. Also you possess brains where I couldn't scare up an incipient headache. Likewise this yere Potter diplodocus lays claim to mental attainments an' a university yelp. But there are some things your intellect foun-

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dries don't demonstrate. An' that's what this beefy one has got t' learn. He learns it f'om me. Five words—ten thousand a word—'buttons, dice an' knife handles'! Weep fer this co-ed o' yours, Gold Denham; lament fer this sorority sister, fer a mysterious an' wastin' disease is settin' up nights gnawin' on his monetary resources."

The Bonehead was right about the roll. Williston Philander Potter was generally regarded by the citizens of Lucky Lode as a sort of itinerant mint. He announced himself as anxious to buy a mine or develop a prospect, but he had heretofore insisted on purchasing at a ratio of about four cents on the dollar, with good will of the seller thrown in. As no one could be long adjacent to such a sellee and have any good will for him, all deals had fallen through.

Smiley Pete, who claimed to have known the fat one back in Weehawken or Schenectady, vouched for the wad, and apologized for his fellow townsman's shortcomings by announcing that his reluctance to buy drinks for the populace was caused, not from miserliness, but through inability to get his hand in his pocket, he having acquired writers' cramp figuring his balance on hand, and that his bullying and insulting disposition was the result of wheeling his daily bank deposit through the jostling throng in a push-cart.

If the Bonehead was going to have financial revenge on this human provocation, there was none in Lucky Lode—L least of all—to warn Potter of the deadfall just ahead. I had won my name of Gold and my high standing in the Southwest by successfully living down the fact that my youth had been spent in a dormitory and on the campus. Yet this two hundred and fifty pounds of flesh and opprobrium persisted in referring to me as Goldbrick. Thus the Bonehead's nefarious designs were safe with me. I would almost offer the red-haired and ivory-domed prospector aid and comfort while he nursed his wounded feelings and picked the currency from the bones of Williston Philander Potter, Esq.

II

"WELL, it sure surpasseth all understanding, but I do believe that Bonehead runt has struck it again."

The speaker, Smiley Pete, gazed from his place at the Gold Nugget bar to where Alchemar Ajax Bunson sat in the far corner of the saloon, intently examining some ore specimens scattered on the table before him.

The Gold Nugget was Lucky Lode's most pretentious palace of iniquity, and nightly the representative element gathered therein to gulp, gamble and gossip. It was three days since the Bonehead had unbosomed his frazzled soul to me and predicted dollar calamity for W. Philander, whose great bulk, while Smiley Pete spoke, was camped at my side, taking up space at the bar that would have accommodated a fair-sized voting precinct.

"Struck it again, you say, Grinny?" asked Potter, who persisted in accumulating unpopularity by calling every man out of his name. "What makes you think so?"

"Think so!" answered Pete, his amiable nature overlooking the reconstructed nickname. "I know so. I'm fully aware of the devious bypaths of this Bonehead's character. He's been gone for three days. He ambles in an hour ago, eschews all stimulants and he's been over there ever since, holding a post-mortem on a parcel of rocks. Take it from me, when Bunson walks around liquid refreshment with sightless eyes it's because he's stuck his pick into pay dirt and sees yellow."

"Has he often hit it right?" queries Potter, gaily cavorting to his doom.

"Huh, well, I should snicker to retort!" interrupts Bert the Bunk from his place on the skirmish-line of imbibers. "That person of the petrified bean is so lucky, if he'd get lost grubless in th' desert he'd come out with a ham an' a bag o' buns."

"But he's that guileless he don't know what to do with it when he gets it," chips in Smiley Pete, unwilling to relinquish his place in the word game. "He trades the Last Red Cent for a few pesos and a talking-machine, and now it's a producer *par excellence*, as the literary sharps say. Thereby he annexes the name of Bonehead. He owns the Queen Anne, which is a mere burrow into the solar plexus of Devil's Mountain yet runs a couple of hundred to the ton on surface rock alone. He hasn't got the wherewithal to work the Queen Anne, and now I'll bet he's staked another Eldorado."

"A brainless prospector, I judge," commented Potter in his most insulting manner, "whose seat of reason lies in his pick and shovel and whose intellect totals up

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about three thoughts a week less than his pack-burro uses."

W. Philander got a decree of separate maintenance from the bar long enough to wobble over to where the preoccupied Bunson was perusing the hunks of quartz, and says:

"Been prospecting again, Bonehead?"

Alchemar Ajax glowered at the waddling insolence and grunted:

"Looks that way, don't it?"

Then he turned to his mineral display and a stingy smile divided his lean face.

"Been gone three days; whereabouts is this recent bonanza?" pursued Potter, the unabashed, picking up one of the chunks of quartz.

"Must be keepin' cases on me, ain't you?" snarled the Bonehead. "And in Lucky Lode's proximity, mister, it ain't conducive t' longevity t' be too nosey about another man's minin' claim!"

The prospector reached out a bony hand and restored the appropriated mineral to its place on the table.

"Oh, I only heard Smiley Pete say you had been gone three days and had struck it again," Potter hastened to explain. "And I only asked the location out of idle curosity."

"Well, idle curiosity keeps Arizona coroners workin' night shifts," replied the Bonehead, some mollified, "but as I've filed on th' claim, it's no secret that it's over on th' Blue hill trail, right this side o' th' Sphinx head."

"I'm going to Birdseye in the morning," says the eager Potter, "and I'll be over that road in the afternoon. I'll call around and see your prospect. I'm a mine expert, you know, and maybe I can help you with information. Good samples you've got there!"

"Fair—just fair," mumbled Alchemar; "but my prospect, as you call it, ain't on exhibition. It ain't no nickelodeon, an' I'm not sellin' admission tickets. There's nothin' t' see. However, I have no lying maid t' tell you I'm not to home, so I guess I'll have t' worry through your visit if you call on me at the Pretty Salleen."

"Pretty Salleen? Is that what you call it?" asked Potter rather derisively. "Must be named after some sweetheart. You savages out here are always calling your holes in the ground after the girl you left behind."

"Just a bit of sentiment," yawned the Bonehead, getting up from the table and gathering his rocks together. "It's about all that's left to us—sulphuric acid fer whisky, jerked leather fer meat, sentiment an' a *long memory!*"

The emphasis on the last two words should have warned W. Philander of fate lying in ambush, but I guess it requires something more than emphasis to sizzle its way through a fat head.

Alchemar Ajax pulled a canvas sample-sack from his pocket, dumped the ore into the bag, tied an address tag to the gathering string, walked over to the bar and addressed the dispenser of liquid destruction:

"Say, Jack, will you give that t' Billy, th' station agent, in th' mornin'? He knows about it and 'll stop fer it. I want it t' go down t' Schurmer & Godley at Bisbee. I sent down some surface rock yesterday f'om Birdseye, but this yere is f'om deeper down an' I'd like them assayers t' perform an autopsy on it soon as they can."

DURING the next week W. Philander Potter, mine expert, fluttered like a deranged hen around Bonehead and the Pretty Salleen. Alchemar Ajax was always on the job, but Potter never found him working the prospect. The Bonehead had dug and blasted a ten-foot tunnel into the face of the hill, but there the proceedings had been adjourned. The prospector explained to the fat Easterner that he was constitutionally opposed to frivolous labor, that he had done all necessary to hold the mineral rights and would work no more on what he only suspected to be a mine.

Such times as the Bonehead resorted to Lucky Lode and the Gold Nugget saloon to rejuvenate his flagging soul with the firewater that would have burned a hole in an asbestos log he was chary of information concerning the Pretty Salleen, and was usually to be found in some out-of-the-way corner, gazing fondly at a piece of quartz and grinning like a locoed Yaqui.

On the morning of the seventh day, Potter, looking across the Nugget bar at a letter stuck in the frame of a mirror, said to the bartender:

"Isn't that some mail for the Bonehead person up at the Pretty Salleen, as he calls it? I'm going up there and he asked me to

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bring him any letters that came. He said he couldn't get down until to-morrow."

"Yep," replied Jack, the drink-slinger. "'Alchemar Ajax Bunson,' them's the high-soundin' words thereon, which translated spells Bonehead. It's from them Bisbee assayers. Reckon th' gentleman with the vitrified peak'll be right glad t' hear from them there mineral clairvoyants."

And Jack tossed the letter to the horrible example of fatty degeneration of the heart, waiting to take it up the Bluehill trail to Bunson.

Potter found the prospector sitting outside the temporary shack he had thrown together near the perforation in the ample bosom of the Sphinx Head. As usual, labor on the Pretty Salleen appeared to have been adjourned *sine die* and *ad infinitum*. Instead of getting ore on to a dump, Bunson was devoting his entire attention to teaching a mangy and fleabitten coyote cub the wisdom of acquiring boiled salt horse by the hind-leg begging process rather than the sneaking second-story methods habitual to the coyote blood.

Bonehead grabbed the letter, in his eagerness treading the cub amidships and squashing a howl out of the beast that might have been heard in Birdseye. Nervously he tore it open, and his trembling fingers played around a twitching mouth as he read the report twice through. Then he folded the document and put it in the inside pocket of a worn khaki coat lying on the ground.

"Do the rock dopesters send good word?" asked W. Philander, his manner showing that was about all he had ridden ten miles to ascertain.

"Tolerable to middlin'," answered the Bonehead, as he got up and stretched himself to almost five feet five. "About what I was expectin'. Just tolerable—just fairish like."

Bunson picked up the coat by one sleeve, dragging the garment after him, and disappeared through the door of the shack, adding as he went:

"I'm goin' t' get my guns. I heard a screechin' an' a scratchin' up th' gulch there a while ago—some outlawed bobcat likely. If you'll wait a few minutes till I stick a few sinkers in him, I'll trail down to Lucky Lode with you. I thirst to mingle with forty-rod an' my fellow man, but I don't want any mountain lion holdin' an inquest on my groceries while I'm circulatin' in that Sodom an' Gomorrah at th' foot o' th' hill."

A moment later the Bonehead, rifle in hand and pet coyote at his heels, vanished up the gulch, and Potter, from his soap-box seat, noticed something white on the ground where the coat had been. The letter from the assayers had fallen from the pocket. Careless Bonehead!

The mine hunter picked it up and drew out the folded sheet. What he read caused him to draw in his breath in little sucking gasps like the exhaust of an overworked tea-kettle:

SCHURMER & GODLEY,
ASSAYERS AND MINERALOGISTS,
Bisbee, Arizona.

Sample submitted by Alchemar Ajax Bunson,
Lucky Lode, Ariz.

Surface rock, free milling ore, weight 18 lbs.
Our Record Number—13673.

Minerals:	Per ton
Gold	$147.50
Silver	Trace
Copper	21.50
Lead	14 Per Cent.
Zinc	None
Sylvanite	None

Attest: Schurmer & Godley,
Bisbee, Arizona.

One hundred and forty-seven fifty in gold to the ton! And that on a surface sample! Surely the Bonehead had tapped the main pipe to the United States Treasury!

W. Philander Potter gazed for a long five minutes at the paper in his hand. Hearing a scrambling up the gulch, he quickly folded it, replaced it in the envelope and flipped it to where it had been dropped by the thoughtless prospector.

"Well, I'm ready to start," said Bunson as he emerged from behind a boulder. "Didn't find trace of a live thing. Guess the varmint, whatever it was, is over in th' next township by now. Gosh! here's that there assay thing"—and he stooped to get it—"Glad I found it. I wanted t' show it t' Gold Denham an' see what he thinks of it."

"Yes, you must have dropped it," mumbled Potter, laboriously climbing onto his protesting pony. "You're careless with your papers, Bonehead."

"Uh-huh; reckon I need one o' them emanuelensis valets that literary sharps hire."

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And the Bonehead chained the coyote to the wall of the shack within striking distance of food and water, closed the door and swung in beside the beefy cargo that threatened to leave the grunting pony sway-backed forevermore.

III

THE next afternoon the watchful Potter noted another letter from the Bisbee assayers, addressed to Alchemar Ajax Bunson, conspicuously decorating the mirror behind the Gold Nugget bar.

His fingers itched to get hold of it, for it must be the report on the deeper samples from the Pretty Salleen, but there seemed no chance. The Bonehead was still in Lucky Lode, pastiming with the roulette pitfall and absorbing snake antidote.

Bunson gave it out that Fortune was no longer smiling at him, but was actually guffawing; wherefore he was inclined to be lavish with his money so long as he had any in stock.

In another hour the letter had disappeared. And that night Potter found the addle-pated prospector at the rickety table in the Fashion drinkery, apparently in the communicative and confidential stage of inebriation.

"When are you going up to the Pretty Salleen?" asked Potter, whose mind seemed to revolve in circles around the ten-foot hole in the Sphinx Head.

"No' fer quite shpell," replied the Bonehead in a voice as thick as the breakfast mush the Noble House cook insisted was edible. "Pretty Salleen's all right;—fine girl that Salleen. She take care herse'f now. Got t' go up an' do some work on Queen Anne. Got t' go soon, too."

"The Queen Anne is your other alleged prospect, isn't it?" queried W. Philander Potter.

"Prospec' —! Y' ta'k like man down s'uth with gag in face. Queen Anne's no prospec'. Queen's reg'lar humdinger like girl she's named after. Got t' go up there [illegible] th' Queen a hull lot."

"Where is the Queen and when do you leave?" Potter would have liked to work around to that last assay, but did not dare so to do his hand, well knowing the instinctive suspicion that lurks in the soul of a drunken miner.

"Leave day af' t'morrow. Got t' go. Helluva ways up in Devil's Mountain. Nothin' up there but cactus, horned toads an' desire to get back. Ain't even got pet coyote up there. Jus' got mountain rat eats out o' hand—that's all."

The Bonehead fumbled in his pocket and pulled out a packet of papers. He spread them on the table and opened one that proved to be a crude map. Then he continued:

"See; here sh' is. Way up there on trail t' Hall's store. Forty mile f'om here. Queen Anne's good ol' girl—lonesome—got t' go—keep her company an' love her some."

"Why don't you sell one of your prospects and work the other?" asked Potter, noting the second letter from the assayers among the bunch lying scattered out upon the table.

"Nope," hiccoughed the Bonehead, as he downed a whisky bought by Potter, which extravagance had broken the latter's record in Lucky Lode. "Sol' one mine—Lasht Red Shent—turned out reg'lar national bank. Got hundred twenty an' phonygraphy talker fer it. Talkin' thing's no good. No recordsh in town—'bout 's much good t' me as 'nother tail t' burro. Been Bonehead ever shince. Say, y' called me Bonehead onct! Deeply insulted. Shaid ought t' prospec' m' head fer buttonsh an' other relicsh of bone age, tha's what he went and said!"

"Oh, I was only joking, Bunson," answered Potter, calling the man by his right name for the first time.

"Don't care; cut m' t' heart, jus' same. Know ain't got no sensh, but hate t' be reminded o' th' lack. 'S all right, though, pard; 's all right. Well, got t' piroot over t' th' Nugget. Havin' good time while money lasts. When it's gone get more f'om Queen Anne an' Prett' Shalleen. Get little more bun on t'night an' t'morrow; then hit trail the next day!"

The Bonehead tottered to his feet and giddily assembled his papers. One of them fluttered unnoticed to the floor as the prospector, tacking like a yacht, headed for the Gold Nugget saloon.

Potter watched the plain drunk hit both sides of the doorway in passing through, then reached for the paper. It was the second report from the assayer. Foolish Bonehead!

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SCHURMER & GODLEY,
ASSAYERS AND MINERALOGISTS,
Bisbee, Arizona.

Sample submitted by Alchemar Ajax Bunson,
Lucky Lode, Ariz.

Quartz and Porphyrite, free milling, weight 20 lbs.
Our Record Number—13682.

Minerals:	Per ton
Gold	$231.80
Silver	2.40
Copper	14.00
Lead	18 Per Cent.
Zinc	None
Sylvanite	None

Attest: Schurmer & Godley,
Bisbee, Arizona.

It was too good to give up. Potter folded the document away in a leather pocketbook, and that same night in his room at the Noble House spoiled much white paper trying to find the least common multiple of a ten-foot tunnel and a drunken prospector.

THE Bonehead's anticipations of further debauch evidently miscarried, for the next afternoon he was sober as a prayer-meeting and appeared to be as busy as a bobtailed pony in fly-time.

Potter, throwing caution to the winds, openly rode herd on Bunson and finally corraled him in the general store, where he was investing in bacon, flour, beans and other articles of virtu. Potter rushed to a clinch instanter.

"Say, Bunson, what will you take for your Pretty Salleen prospect?"

"Oh, so it's Bunson, is it?" retorted the Bonehead, all his animosity returning as he seemed to forget his forgiving mood of the previous night. "Since when did them ribald jests about bonehead an' buttons an' th' dice stop gettin' a laugh? Better make it twenty pounds o' bacon, Joe, I'm gone fer some shift this time."

"I'm talking man to man now, Bunson, and not dealing in nicknames," Potter replied. "What will you take for the Salleen?"

"Why don't you make an offer fer th' Queen Anne?" the prospector answered. "I know more about it—a couple o' cans o' chilli, Joe—than I do about the Pretty Salleen. I could figure better. No, ten pounds o' beans 'll be enough, Joe; I'm no army."

"I wouldn't take the Queen Anne as a gift," declared the fat bargainer. "It's too far away—too long a haul. I'll give you five thousand cash for the Pretty Salleen."

"Got any condensed extract o' cow, Joey? Make it about three cans." Bunson was paying more attention to the man across the counter than to the one at his elbow. "Look here, Potter, I'm not playin' penny ante. The Pretty Salleen is either a mine or just an achin' void. If it's a mine it's worth money; if it's a void in a hill it's null. See? Any mine that's a mine brings me more than five thousand. Y' may recall that I broke my eye-teeth on th' ore in th' Last Red Cent. I don't bite any more. An' I'm so deef f'om list'nin' to that blarin' phonygraph I can't hear anything but fifty thousand dollars. An' y' want to shout quick, 'cause I'm gettin' deefer every second. Yep, twenty-five pounds o' flour 'll keep me an' that there mountain rat in sour dough fer three months."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" yelped Potter. "Well, I *have* been flattering you! Your head isn't bone. It's armor plate!"

"You don't charge fer th' weevils an' worms in that flour, do you, Joe? An' I want some good, courageous sugar; th' kind with lots o' sand in it," ordered the miner, ignoring the insult. Then, turning to W. Philander: "Fifty thousand, I said, an' it goes as it lays. Just tack another cipher on your first offer t' represent the hole I've dug in th' Sphinx. If you don't want it, take th' Queen—she's a reality—th' Salleen's only a faint suspicion, an' so I tell you."

Potter declined to consider the Queen Anne and Bunson ceased to urge him, but they argued and wrangled for half an hour while the miner continued to purchase and pay for provender. The deal was only agreed upon when Bunson was on the point of departing for the mountains. Potter, seeing nothing else to do, was compelled to come to the Bonehead's figure. Those two assays—$147.50 and $231.80 a ton—were too much!

Even at the wind-up, Bunson threatened to squabble all negotiations by insisting on spot cash. He declared he knew nothing of banks, checks or drafts, and the only way he would deal was on pay-on-the-nail basis—real money that he could deposit in the Gold Nugget safe and which only nitroglycerin or giant powder could disturb.

Potter hustled long and earnestly and perspiringly, and before nightfall succeed-

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ed in raising the amount on checks to the express company and to Ed Graves, proprietor of the Gold Nugget, who always kept a goodly supply of filthy on hand wherewith to hold at bay the men who bucked the tiger in the Nugget resort.

Fifty thousand in gold and currency passed to the Bonehead, and the Pretty Salleen became the property of Williston Philander Potter. Whereupon Alchemar Ajax Bunson turned his back on the lonesome trails and the friendly mountain rat and abandoned himself to a care-free and butterfly existence.

IV

TWO weeks later a mass of hulking humanity—upwards of two-hundred and fifty pounds thereof—pitched and tossed into the Fashion saloon. The mass much resembled a blood-sweating hippopotamus; inflamed eyes protruded from the face; the veins stood out on the forehead like double knots in a wet lariat, and from one fat hand a document waved like a futile signal of distress. It was W. Philander Potter. He spluttered like an energetic fuse and appeared midway between fatal apoplexy and terrific explosion.

He teetered to the bar, where a small red-haired man was creating work for unemployed Eastern distillers by purchasing drinks for Lucky Lode so rapidly that a drought loomed on the horizon.

"Look here—you Bunson—see this!" cried Potter as he turned the little man around from the bar and shook the paper in his freckled face. "It's from Schurmer & Godley at Bisbee. Understand? It's the report on samples sent down last week from the Pretty Salleen. Read it—you! Gold nothing! Silver nothing! Lead trace! How about it? Talk to me—don't stand there grinning like a gargoyle!"

"How about it?" snapped Alchemar Ajax, pushing the irate fat man from him and getting his meager back against the bar. "What do I know about it? Don't read me your epistles. I don't want to be bothered list'nin' to th' love-letters of a lollop."

"But it's the assay from the Pretty Salleen that you sold me! No gold, no silver, no nothing!"

And if some one had cut the rope, Potter would have written a new page in aeronautic history.

"Well, I'm glad you had an assay before you spent any money on development work; that's always th' safest plan. I'd almost decided to blow a few dollars myself thataway when you bought me out," said the Bonehead with a vigorous nod of approval.

"You'd almost decided— You'd— Wh— what about those two reports—the one you dropped up at the— The one you lost over there at the table?"

"Oh, now you enlighten me!" and Bunson's lean paw tried to hide a smile. "So you found 'em, did you? I wondered what became of that last one."

"Of course I found them, you fiery-thatched idiot! What did you think I bought on if it wasn't on the strength of those reports?"

"Well, now, I wondered about that some, too—why you were so blamed anxious to own th' Pretty Salleen when I urged you t' take th' Queen Anne."

"It's a bunc—a con game," wailed W. Philander, thrashing his arms like a striving windmill. "It's a swindle! The Pretty Salleen! Fifty thousand dollars for a name—and you said it was a bit of sentiment! Fah!"

"Oh, that name," apologetically explained the Bonehead. "Yes, yes; I wanted to speak to you about that. You see, I'm not an intellectual paragon like you. I guess I spelled that there name wrong. I looked it up in Gold Denham's dictionary last night. It's spelled correct S-A-L-I-N-E. Danny Webster, th' word shark who indicted that dictionary, allows th' word means 'salty.' Pretty Saline—Pretty Salty! It's my mistake."

"I want to know about those two assays!" Potter persisted. " —— the misspelling and —— the salt!"

"No, you —— th' salt; it's yours, not mine," replied Bunson. "An' about them assays: You see, I'd never had any assays on that there mine you bought. Them two reports you surreptitiously snitched happened t' be on ore from th' Queen Anne mine—th' one you passed up. So far as assays is concerned th' Pretty Saline—S-A-L-I-N-E is correct—has sure got a alibi!"

As he turned to the bar, Alchemar Ajax Bunson, ex-prospector and present capitalist, was heard to murmur,

" 'Buttons, dice an' knife-handles'! Ten thousand a word. I guess that 'll keep his tongue in a a conversational strait-jacket for a while!"

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The *Sultanic* Robbery

by Horace Hazeltine

HER hair was changed. It was of a different color—red almost as a hot July sunset—and artificially waved. And she wore a kimono of pale lavender satin, nearly covered with intricate embroidery, that must have cost a couple of hundred dollars if it cost a cent. But I knew her the minute I saw her. And yet I had seen her but once before in my life. Then her hair was black and straight and smooth, and she had on a plain gray tailor-made, and a little hat of dark straw.

That was in England, and nearly a year had passed since then. I had gone down to the dock at Southampton to meet my husband, who was a cabin steward on the *Sultanic*, and had met a peck of trouble instead. For there had been a big jewel robbery on the boat, and Dan was under suspicion. My Dan! Another steward—a friend of his—came and told me about it.

It was a very mysterious case. The rich Mrs. Winterbourne had lost her $100,000 diamond necklace. Most people, I suppose, remember reading about it. The newspapers were full of it at the time. She had worn the necklace at the Captain's dinner, the last night out. She remembered quite well taking it off and seeing the maid return it to her jewel-case.

But the next morning it was gone. Meanwhile, so far as she knew, there had been no one in her cabin but the maid; and the maid swore she had not left the suite for a minute. It was a *cabin de luxe* of three rooms—a parlor and two sleeping-rooms, one of which the maid occupied.

But the maid swore, too, that she had surprised Dan very early that morning, while her mistress was still asleep, prowling about the parlor. She had come upon him, she said, as she came out of her own room; that he had seemed flustered and had tried to excuse his presence by saying that he had come for the breakfast order, though he knew perfectly well that Mrs. Winterbourne never took anything but coffee and rolls.

Dan denied this, of course, and I, for one, never doubted his word. What was more, he declared he *had* met the maid that morning, but not in the cabin. He had seen her on deck, he said, before sunrise,

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and he had distinctly seen her throw something overboard.

Naturally, it was ridiculous to suppose that she, or any one else, would throw a $100,000 necklace into the sea. So his story was generally taken as a very clumsy effort to shift suspicion from himself. I am nothing if not just, and I can readily see that it must have appeared that way to any one who didn't really know my Dan. But I never doubted he saw what he said he did.

His friend, as I say, told me all this. Just as he finished he caught me suddenly by the sleeve and said, excitedly:

"Look! There they come now!"

Two women and several men were coming down the gang-plank. One of the women was Mrs. Malcolm Winterbourne. She was beautiful. Not young, but excellently preserved; and stately, too, with a figure that, to my way of thinking, was perfect. The other was the maid. Henriette Dubois they called her. And she was just as I have said—dark-haired and neat-looking, and not pretty, but what you might call spirited.

They had to pass close to me, and I got a good look at her. She was talking to one of the men—a constable, I think he was—and at that moment she laughed. I never saw any one with such a short upper lip. When she laughed she showed not only her teeth, but her gums as well. It was very odd. And I noticed, too, that she had a scar on her chin, which gave the effect of a deep dimple or cleft. From her name I supposed she was French; but I afterward learned she was a Canadian.

Of course I hated her. Not because I felt sure she was the thief, but because she had lied about Dan, and he had been put under arrest in consequence. They had to let him go at last for want of evidence, but they kept track of us for months. They thought he had passed the necklace to some confederate on board, and that by watching him they'd learn who the confederate was, and in the end recover the thing. They had searched every one they dared to, and had torn the *Sultanic* apart in their efforts to find it somewhere about the ship. But they never found it.

Dan lost his place with the steamship company. That goes almost without saying. But he was blacklisted, too; and couldn't get on any other line. He had a hard time of it that year. We came to New York—it was here he had married me—and he did what he could. For a while he had a place in one of the Fifth Avenue clubs; but some one who had been a passenger on the *Sultanic* that trip recognized him, and he was let out.

I WAS more fortunate. I am a good manicure, if I do say so; and I know something about massage and hairdressing. I was a lady's maid before I was married. Well, I just fell into a berth the second week after I landed. It was with a friend of mine who was managing a beauty-parlor, near Forty-second Street and Broadway.

I had been there eight months when a call came in one morning to send a manicure to Mrs. Stickney, at the Hotel Dalton, on Fifty-fourth Street. I was sent. And the minute I set eyes on Mrs. Stickney I recognized her as Henriette Dubois. There was that scar on her chin, and when she smiled at me her short upper lip drew away from her teeth till her gums showed pink above them.

It was all I could do to keep from screaming. I'm not as good tempered as I might be; and her injustice to Dan had gone on rankling in me for a whole year. In a flash, I thought of everything—how he was suffering from it yet; and how, if it hadn't been for her lie, I'd not be working in a manicure shop and doing the nails of women that weren't fit to lace my boots! And my hands itched to get at that henna-colored hair of hers, and to tear it out by the roots.

But I thought, too, that maybe this was an act of Providence: that maybe, if I didn't betray myself, I might, even at this late day, discover something through her that would solve the mystery of the *Sultanic* robbery and place the blame where it properly belonged.

And so I just put an iron grip on myself and smiled back at her. And then I began at once, in a very businesslike way, to open up my bag and to take out my scissors and files and buffers and orange-sticks; while I asked her, sweetly enough, where I could get some warm water.

She directed me to the bathroom; and when I returned to her I felt that I could touch her hands without wincing. It's really wonderful what you can do with your will, if your object is big enough. And what could be bigger for me than the put-

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ting of Dan straight before the world again?

I just loathed the sight of that woman's fingers, and yet I believe that I never in my life took more pains to please, or did a better piece of work, than that morning. I found out, first of all, how she liked her nails done and I did them just that way: pointed and pink, with a polish you could see your face in.

And all the while I studied her. She was chatty, and so I soon found what interested her most. All her talk was of the conspicuously rich—of millionaires and their wives and sweethearts. But she seemed to know very little about them, aside from what was told by the newspapers.

So when she found that I knew some of the women from having worked for them, she was all ears at once. And maybe I didn't gossip! I was particularly careful, though, not to say anything really unpleasant, or that would seem like betraying a confidence. For that, I was sure, would react against me in the end. She would conclude that I was not to be trusted; and my whole aim was to have her trust me completely.

She wore a wedding-ring, and with it an engagement-ring that must have cost a mint of money. It was a great heart-shaped diamond, slightly pinkish, surrounded by smaller diamonds, each pure white and wonderfully brilliant. Indeed, I could see that, whoever Mr. Stickney was, he must have oodles of money; and yet she wasn't living like a very rich woman. She never questioned the price of anything, and drew checks recklessly for the silliest fancies, but she was living in a second-rate hotel instead of a house, or even an apartment, of her own; and, what puzzled me most was that she had no maid. Having been one herself, it seemed to me that when Fortune smiled that would have been the first luxury for her to crave.

Of course I didn't reach all these conclusions that first day. She liked my work so well and enjoyed my gossip so much that she had me come to her twice a week.

II

I HAD been doing her nails for over a month before she ever mentioned her husband. And then she did so in connection with something that I had been hoping and praying and hinting for from the very first. It was mid-July, and very hot, and nobody was in New York that could possibly get away, except the usual horde of Summer visitors from the South and West.

There wasn't a breath of breeze in her rooms that morning, and the sun beating down on the baking awnings outside her windows made the place like a furnace. I am only a wisp of a woman, and I can stand oppressive weather better than most, I guess, but I was nearly all in, after a sleepless night and a too brisk walk from the shop up to Fifty-fourth Street.

"Isn't this day awful?" I said, as I dropped into a chair. "Goodness knows, it's hard to be poor in such weather! I don't know what I wouldn't do for just enough money to keep me, so I wouldn't have to work in Summer."

"It *is* fierce, ain't it?" she replied. She had less education even than I, and I certainly never took any prizes for scholarship. "Mr. Stickney and I would 'a' been away long ago, only his business kept him. But this morning he said he'd be able to go by Saturday, and we're going. The White Mountains. Yes, it's cooler there than anywhere, and we want the coolest there is."

I couldn't even pretend to enthuse over her good fortune. Besides, just now, I had a better card to play. I mopped my perspiring brow and neck with my coarse little handkerchief, and followed up my first lead with another of the same suit.

"If I only knew a way," I said seriously, "to get a thousand dollars, without any risk of punishment, I wouldn't hesitate a minute over the right and wrong of it—I'm just that desperate!"

She gave me a quick, searching look out of those small, beady, black eyes of hers; and I felt, on the instant, that maybe I had gone too far. A person so lacking in honesty was hardly a desirable visitor, even though she *was* a good manicure. So I made haste to hedge.

"You needn't be afraid that I'm going to stab you with my scissors and rip the ring off your finger, Mrs. Stickney," I laughed. "I'm the biggest coward in the world; and I wouldn't take a pin, for all my desperation, unless I knew I'd never be suspected. But some persons have so much, and I so little, that enough to make me happy they wouldn't even miss."

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"You're right about that," was her reply. "I wouldn't stagger at helping myself to a Morgan or Rockefeller million, if I got the chance. Some's got too much and some's got too little."

I was just dying to say something about how neatly the rich Mrs. Malcolm Winterbourne was relieved of a hundred thousand in diamonds, last Summer. But I didn't dare. If there was ever any mention of that incident between us, it must be by her.

And at this time, especially, I could take no risks of awakening her to the fact that she had been recognized. She was going away, and I might never see her again. Certainly she would take care that I never did, should she get an inkling that I knew her in that connection.

And how glad I was, before I left her that morning, that I had exercised that self-restraint! For, at the last minute, just as I was about to bid her good-by, she proposed that I go to the White Mountains with her, as her maid.

That was what I had coveted from the first—to be taken into her exclusive employ. Of course this going away with her was a most agreeable feature of it, but I hadn't thought of that particularly. To be with her all the time at the hotel, and so get closer and closer into her confidence, would have been a gratification in itself, notwithstanding the hot weather. For I had felt sure, all along, that if I could only see enough of her, she would be sure to betray herself sooner or later.

You see, I was convinced, even at the moment when I saw her on the dock at Southampton, that she was the thief. And when I found her, only a year later, so changed in circumstances and appearance, my conviction seemed in a way proved. I realized, to be sure, that she might have married a rich man and come by her money in that way. But I didn't believe it. What seemed much more likely to me was that this Mr. Stickney, whoever he might be, was her confederate at the time; that he was a passenger on the *Sultanic*, and that she had turned over the necklace to him, and that, in some way, he had smuggled it ashore.

Dan had a notion that the whole thing had been prearranged, and that a lugger was lying off the Scilly Islands that morning to pick up the *Sultanic* and drag out of the sea the floating box, or air-tight canister, which enclosed the necklace, and which Henriette Dubois cast overboard. But this seemed to me rather a far-fetched explanation. There were too many chances of the thing being lost, especially if it was thrown over, as Dan said it was, in the dim twilight before sunrise.

It seems that Mrs. Winterbourne never questioned Henriette's honesty for a moment. She said she had come to her well recommended and had been with her for eight months, and had proved herself the very soul of honor. My, how I laughed at that, when I read it in a newspaper! But I'd show Mrs. Winterbourne, yet!

WE WENT to Bethlehem, first. That is, we made our headquarters there. Mr. Stickney's big touring-car had been sent up, and in that we traveled all over the region. You would never have thought Mr. Stickney a successful business man, to look at him. He was a wizened little fellow, of about forty, and had the hollow cheeks and neck of a consumptive.

I never saw another man, either, that could obliterate himself as he did. Except when he was in the car, we scarcely ever saw him. He was what you'd call inconspicuous, I suppose. Nobody seemed ever to notice him. And, of course, this fitted in with my theory. He could have been on the *Sultanic* without any one knowing he was there. Certainly he would have been the last person they'd thought of searching.

When we had been in the White Mountains a month, without my seeing or hearing a single thing that could be taken as incriminating, I began to get a little discouraged. I realized then that I had a very shrewd pair to deal with; and that if I was ever to get any closer into the woman's confidence, I'd have to devise some way of making a beginning for myself. And just about that time an opportunity came, and I seized it.

We had the *Herald* every day, and one morning there appeared a picture of Mrs. Winterbourne and her two handsome boys, who, the paper said, were at school at Eton. I folded the paper with this picture out, and put it where Mrs. Stickney couldn't fail to see it. And I took good care to be on hand when she did.

Would you believe it, she stared straight

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at it, and never so much as turned a hair? I have said that in New York I didn't dare mention the Winterbourne robbery; but now it was different. I had been with her longer and more intimately; and, besides, I felt the necessity of pretending to her that I was simply lost in admiration of clever thievery. And so I picked up the *Herald* myself, and said quite easily, as was natural enough:

"I just love this Mrs. Winterbourne's face. And hasn't she two fine, strapping boys!"

"Mrs. Winterbourne!" she questioned, never losing her self-possession for a moment. "What Mrs. Winterbourne is that?"

"Why, don't you remember?" I explained. "The woman who lost a terribly expensive diamond necklace on her way to Europe last Summer? No one ever found out what became of it. One of the stewards was suspected, but he got off scot free. Now that's the kind of a haul I'd like to make!"

"No," she said, "I don't remember it. Do you mean to say the necklace was never found? It don't seem possible." If I hadn't hated her so much I must have admired her for that.

"Never," I answered. "At least I never saw that it was."

"It must have made somebody rich," she added. "Let's have a look at the woman that lost it." And she took the paper from my hand and gazed at her former mistress as though she was looking at a perfect stranger.

"I don't like the way she wears her hair," she added, and threw the paper down.

Well, I said to myself, I didn't make much by that, after all. But, as the saying is, I builded better than I knew. For on the way back to New York—it was then about the first of September—while I was doing her hair one morning in the drawing-room of the Pullman, she said:

"Did you ever notice the emeralds that Mrs. Barton wore two or three times at Bethlehem?"

"Why, yes, m'm," I answered. "I certainly did. I never saw any such gorgeous jewels before in all my life."

"Mr. Stickney admired 'em, too," she went on. "He's goin' to give me a set just like 'em." And I would have been willing to bet anything, right then, that at that very moment Mr. Stickney had those identical emeralds of Mrs. Barton's in his pocket.

But, you see, I was far from appreciating the artists in crime that I had to deal with. It was not their way to do anything so crude as rob a fellow guest's jewel-case, in a big Summer hotel, and then run for it.

I KNEW that a certain intimacy had sprung up at the hotel between Mrs. Stickney and Mrs. Barton, but I didn't realize how close it was until after we got back to town. Then hardly a day passed without their seeing each other. Mrs. Barton was at the Dalton a good deal, and she seemed to take quite a fancy to me. Mrs. Stickney, of course, was always telling her what a good maid I was, and having me do Mrs. Barton's nails for her, and getting me to give her a face-massage or dress her hair in some new way.

And all this time I never suspected for a moment what was in the wind, until one day my mistress said to me:

"How would you like to take a place with Mrs. Barton? She's going to Europe in about ten days, and I thought it 'd be a chance for you to see the other side."

I didn't jump at the chance, though. It was Mrs. Stickney I wanted to watch, and I didn't like the idea of being sent out of the country.

"But what will you do?" I asked.

"I—oh, I am going into a sanitarium. I haven't been well, really, for a year. You know the throat trouble I get at times. Well, the doctor says it'll take an operation to fix it, so I'm going to have it done." She hesitated a bit, and I saw she was debating something. I guess if I had said at once that I'd go to Mrs. Barton, she would have waited until I got there before she made this last proposition. But she saw that I'd need some extra inducement, so she gave it to me right then.

"You've got a beau here in New York, and don't want to leave him. That's it, ain't it?" she continued. "Well, if you'll take this place, I'll see that you get enough out of it to get married on as soon as you get back to America."

I wonder to this day how it was I didn't betray myself, then and there. For her words struck me all of a heap. She had some crooked work for me to do, and I was to have a share of the spoils! It had come at the end of two months, and yet I had grown impatient waiting. I was delighted

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and ashamed of myself at the same time. For this I should have been content to wait a year—five years, if need be. For at that moment, even, I could see Dan vindicated and back in his place on one of the liners.

She never had the slightest suspicion I was not all I pretended to be, or she would have read in my face my emotion, or have sensed it. As it was, she went straight on, intent on getting her way.

"It's like this," she said. "Mr. Stickney's promised me them emeralds like Mrs. Barton's if I'll go in the sanitarium and have the operation. But I don't want 'em unless they're an exact match. I wouldn't dare ask her, well as I know her, to lend me hers to copy; but if you are her maid, you can easily borrow them and let me have them, without her knowin' a thing about it."

"But if she should miss them!" I objected. "If by any chance she should want them while you had them!"

"Don't be a fool!" she snapped. "You know what her habits are. She often stays out till all hours. And then she sleeps most of the next day. So all you'll have to do is to 'phone me, and I'll come up. Then I'll say: 'Oh, no, I wouldn't have you disturb her.' And I'll say it right out, when the butler or one of the other maids is present, so they'll never have an idea I was sent for. And you'll say: 'Here's the book Mrs. Barton was a-goin' to lend you.' And you'll have the emeralds done up, all ready. I'll have given you a box, you see, just the size of a book to put 'em in. Then I'll come back in the afternoon and return 'em, so that before she dresses to go out again they'll be back."

"I'm terribly afraid," I said. "Suppose something should happen, and you couldn't get back? She'd accuse me of stealing them, and I'd be arrested!"

She looked at me with one of those hard, cruel looks of hers. "I thought you were so willing to rob the rich," she sneered. "This isn't robbery, of course. You could prove you lent them to me, if the worst came to the worst."

"But I couldn't! That's just it."

"Well, you could say so. I'm sure I'd see you through." She hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Besides, nothin' is goin' to happen. You'll get a thousand dollars for doin' very little, and without a scrap of danger in it. *What* could be easier?"

Of course she won me over. That is, I let her think she did; though I wouldn't have missed the chance for anything in the world, in spite of all my objecting.

III

I WENT to Mrs. Barton the following day. But in the meantime I saw Dan and told him all about it. You see I had never let Mrs. Stickney know I was married. People like her are the shrewdest sort. She might have looked Dan up, and then my cake would have been dough for certain.

"There's only one thing to do," Dan said, "and that is to take the police in with us in this. You know that Mr. Hammond that I've been valeting lately? Well, he's a great friend of Deputy Police Commissioner Dando. I'll be able to fix it, I imagine, through him."

Dan fixed it just that way; and from the day I went to Mrs. Barton's, Mrs. Stickney was shadowed. What was more, Mr. Stickney was looked up, too. I never *had* learned what his business was. "He's down in the Street," Mrs. Stickney used to say, and naturally I thought he was a stock-broker.

I was instructed—by the police, I mean, through Dan—to go ahead and carry out the scheme just as Mrs. Stickney had planned it. And I did. On four different mornings she came and borrowed a book, and on four afternoons she brought it back. At least that was what it looked like, and not a soul knew the difference, except ourselves and the police. The emeralds came back each time, looking just the same, and for the life of me, even then, I couldn't figure out where any dishonesty was to come out of it.

Meanwhile Mrs. Barton, who was a big, handsome woman, though rather coarse—if she hadn't lacked refinement she never could have taken up with that Dubois creature—was making her preparations to go to Europe. She was to sail on the *Puritania*, on October 25th, and I was to go with her. That is, she thought I was going, and so did Mrs. Stickney.

On the morning of the twenty-third the emeralds were borrowed for the last time, and I felt sure that they wouldn't come back until the police brought them. Just the same, I couldn't understand why, if

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this was the game, it had been necessary to take them the other four times, just for a few hours. And then I thought I began to see. . .

The other times were to win my confidence. This time there would be delay. I'd call her up, or go to see her, and beg her not to disgrace me. Then she would say the duplicate set had been harder to match and set than she expected. But she would surely have them back early to-morrow. And still they wouldn't come; and at the last minute Mrs. Barton would be left without a maid, and, in the excitement of sailing, would probably never miss her emeralds until well out at sea.

I couldn't, for the life of me, see any other solution. So, when she returned them promptly on time, I was dumfounded. It happened that Mrs. Barton was out just then, and the butler told her so.

"I'm so sorry!" she said. "I have the last of the books, here, that I borrowed from her. Can I see her maid? Or, do you think she's too busy packing?" Oh, she was a clever woman, all right!

Thomas let her come straight up to Mrs. Barton's room, where, as she had guessed, I was busy over the trunks.

"There!" she said. "The last time. Look at them, and see that they are as you gave them to me."

I looked. I looked carefully. There were some little identifying marks on the settings that made me sure these were the originals and not the copies.

"Yes," I returned. "They are all right."

"And you've made a thousand dollars, without scarcely turnin' your hand. You're a very lucky girl."

I couldn't believe it. Was it possible that all along I had misjudged her? That the police had been called upon only to be made to follow a wild-goose chase?

"Then I don't have to go to Europe, after all!" I cried. "I can give up my place, and stay in New York, and be married as soon as I like!"

She caught me viciously by the arm.

"Fool!" she hissed. "I thought you were acting. I thought you knew all the time. Of course, you must go to Europe! You must let Mrs. Barton get a sight of her emeralds after she is on the ship. Not too much of a sight, mind you; but just enough to know that she had them on board. And then——"

IN THAT instant I saw it all. I am no judge of jewels. Paste, glass, —something cheap, but a fair imitation, had been substituted in the settings for the original gems. I know my arm must have quivered in her clutch.

"And then," she whispered, "*you must throw them overboard!*"

I broke away from her and staggered half across the room, dropping down on a closed trunk, to become wildly hysterical. I laughed. Oh, how I laughed! And the tears streamed down my face. Tears which blinded me, so that I saw her only as through a haze. And between my bursts of laughter I cried:

"Throw them overboard! Throw them overboard, as you threw the Winterbourne necklace! As *you* did, Henriette Dubois!"

I couldn't have helped it, if I knew I should be killed for it. And killed I would have been if she had had her way. But it seems the police had secured about all the evidence they needed, except the actual settings with their fake green stones. They had got the original emeralds, which was the more important, having entered the little shop down on Maiden Lane where Stickney did business as a diamond-setter under an altogether different name, and opened his safe five minutes after he had started uptown.

Mrs. Barton was with them when they did it. For they had notified her to come and identify her property, and she was with them when, in the midst of my hysterics, they burst into her own room and caught the Stickney woman, or whoever she was, rushing upon me with an uplifted majolica vase in her hand.

She is serving a ten-year sentence up the Hudson now, and Stickney is working in another wing of the same prison. I don't know whether they make jewelry up there or not. But if they do, they've got a diamond-setter of some class to help them.

Dan has been back again on the *Sultanic* for two months now, and I've given up manicuring and hairdressing for child's nursing. Our little girl will be three months old to-morrow.

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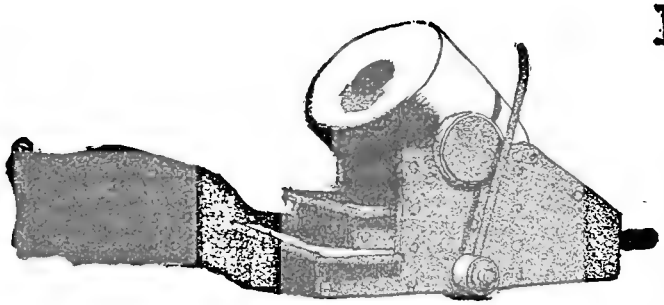

Francis Bannerman

A man of mystery and history

by Walter Galt

FROM the scientific utilization of waste products to a bird's-eye view of war and international politics is apparently a far cry; the connection between them still seems obscure even when it is admitted that the waste products are nearly all the waste of Governments. But the two are interdependent.

Without inside information about what is happening, and about what is going to happen in the world, the marketing of the waste would be impossible, and its purchase would be useless; and once under way the very conduct of the business discloses to its owner still other international secrets that bring still more business. The connecting link between the information and the waste is Francis Bannerman.

Everybody knows his store on Broadway; or at least all New Yorkers do. It is the place where a Gatling gun points straight through the store-window and menaces the passer-by—the place with the window full of guns and shields and relics of half-forgotten wars.

Thousands upon thousands pass it every week-day, and hundreds enter, for Bannerman's Museum is free to everybody; but there are few who suspect that the owner of it is well known to every civilized Government in the world; that he knows their secrets, understands the movements of their armaments, and lives by cleaning up their waste. Such, though, is the fact.

Apart from the nature of his business, which is absolutely unique, the only unusual thing about Mr. Bannerman is his perpetual youth; the beginnings of his business were laid somewhere near the Brooklyn Navy Yard in Civil War days, but he seems to have discovered the secret of youth along with the details of foreign armaments and the history of revolutions. If there were such a thing as an average American business man, he would fill the bill so far as appearances go; there, though, the average leaves off, for his brain is as amazing as his perennial youth and his extraordinary business.

THE MAN WHO FITS OUT ARMIES

HIS Broadway store—or Museum as he prefers to call it—is better stocked than any public museum of its kind in the world; he has agents in every quarter of the globe who send him constant additions to it, and museums and private collectors in every civilized country send to Bannerman's for what they want.

He has on view there specimens of every kind of death-dealing weapon from 'way back in the days when men slew one another with rough-hewn lumps of rock down to the present day of pump-guns and Maxims and automatic pistols. There are medals there, and shot-torn battle-flags; pistols, blunderbusses, swords, regimental badges; the spears of Congo warriors; and the quick-firers of a modern fleet; every single item in the place is catalogued and numbered, and each single specimen has its history; what is more, Mr. Bannerman knows that history, and can tell it—and will.

But it is the things that he knows and will not talk about that make him so amazingly interesting; his whole museum hums with an atmosphere of secrets well kept. On the subject of curios he has no secrets from any one, and he will go to any amount of pains to give you the accurate history of any one of them; but the first question that occurs to any one who sees the Gatling in the window, and hears of his huge purchases of war

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material, is Where is the market for that?

What about the six-inch guns and modern rifles? How about the millions and millions of rounds of service cartridges that he keeps in his wonderful island arsenal up the Hudson River, and the military saddles, and swords and general equipment of an army corps? Stories of gun-runners and filibusters and contraband of war come into one's head instinctively as the only obvious solution. Mr. Bannerman will tell you where he has sold some of them, and where he is going to sell some more of them; but about the bulk he is as silent as the guns themselves.

THAT Broadway store is not the limit of his activity by a long way; he has agents in every country in the world, and since long before the Franco-Prussian War he has had dealings, either through them or in person, with all the civilized and semi-civilized Governments on earth. The French used against the Prussians rifles that came from Bannerman; and in the heart of darkest and densest Africa are half-naked savages armed with guns that came from Bannerman too; guns that passed through his hands are being used by the Northern Eskimos, and he has completely equipped more than one army in Central and South America.

But that does not account for nearly all his enormous stock-in-trade. A man who spends a hundred thousand dollars at a time on war material has got to find a constant and not a sporadic outlet for it; he must keep on selling it all the time.

And yet—read his catalogue; a masterpiece of its kind; or—enter his Museum; find a warning notice, insisted on over and over again, that he will sell no weapons of any sort to any one without credentials, or to any one likely to break the peace. And that warning is true; there is no buncombe about it. You can't go in there and pay down your money and take away a Maxim and a million rounds, for you'll find he won't sell.

GUN-RUNNERS AND FILIBUSTERS, NO ADMITTANCE!

QUITE recently a man went in to Mr. Bannerman with bank references that were unexceptionable, and credentials that looked all right on the surface. He placed an order for several thousand rounds of ammunition, for cash with order, and the deal very nearly went through. Not quite, though; there was something suspicious about the man's requirements in the way of packing, sprung at the last moment, and the deal was called off.

The man bought his cartridges elsewhere; then he packed them in cement barrels and took them down to a pier for shipment. When the Federal officers pounced on him they discovered that the cartridges were contraband of war, intended for the Hayti rebels. At the auction that followed the Government seizure Mr. Bannerman bought all the cartridges at a bargain; so instead of taking in money over the deal he paid money out, and increased his stock. The cartridges went to the Island of Santo Domingo, not to the Haitian rebels, but to the President of the neighboring republic, Santo Domingo,

The conundrum is tantalizing. Nobody who has once spoken to Mr. Bannerman could ever doubt his honesty. His whole retail trade is based on his reputation for it, for he fills no orders that are not accompanied by cash, and money is sent to him from everywhere in payment for goods that have yet to be delivered.

He looks honest. He is the direct descendant of a type of Scotsman that is notoriously honest; and his dealings with the Federal Government would have come to an end long ago if his business methods had not been above suspicion. And yet, he admittedly does the largest business of its kind in the world; he buys second-hand rifles and ammunition in enormous quantities wherever he can get them; he has in stock, ready for prompt shipment, Maxims, Gatlings, Krupps, and even siege-guns with their complement of ammunition. Stored in his island arsenal are *more than seven million rounds of one particular kind of cartridge alone!* Perfectly good cartridges, but for obsolete guns such as no first-class power would buy. And yet again, he will not sell to revolutionists or rebels, or to Tom, Dick and Harry, even though they bring the money with them! The Federal officers know it, too; they don't even trouble to watch him.

WHERE does all his stock go to, then? He buys for cash and pays a fair price; in fact Mr. Bannerman was the originator of the sealed bid system

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that put an end to the robbery of Uncle Sam by means of rings at every public auction. A man can't keep on paying out dollars by the hundred thousand and become a millionaire without having a profitable outlet for his goods. Where is the outlet?

It is no use asking Mr. Bannerman. The outlet might possibly become a cul-de-sac if he talked about it, but he does not talk; he is a past master of the art of keeping secrets, and he shuts his lips as tightly as the breech of one of his own cannon when asked to explain the apparently unexplainable.

And the more you inquire into it, the more totally unexplainable it seems. He shoots off many of the old cartridges that he buys—frequently as many as fifty thousand in a day. And he breaks up many of the old rifles, but not for the scrap-heap; new stocks are fitted on to old barrels, or new barrels on to old stocks; some of them are converted into new types by increasing the bore or by altering the breech mechanism; but they remain rifles, every one of them, and by the time that they are packed and ready for shipment they are as good as they ever were, or better.

And naturally he does not keep them in the arsenal for fun; he is a man of business, out after the money like the rest of us.

WHO BUYS?

WHAT happens to them all, then? A few hundreds of them go to Canada and other sparsely settled countries where men still depend upon the gun to keep the larder filled; but those are only hundreds. What about the thousands and the hundred thousands that he keeps on hand? Rush orders from foreign Governments on the eve of war have no doubt helped from time to time; but wars are not so very frequent nowadays, and all the first-class Powers keep a big supply of their own; in fact, it is from first-class powers that Mr. Bannerman buys. The problem remains, Where does he sell?

The Panama revolution throws no light on things. At the time when that happened the rebels were found to be in possession of discarded United States Government rifles —thousands of them—and the Government came in for some very caustic criticism on the strength of it. But the Government was able to prove that the rifles had been sold to Bannerman; what is more, they proved delivery to Bannerman.

That looks like a scent, doesn't it? But wait. Bannerman's turn came next; the newspapers investigated him, and he was able to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that he had not sold them to the rebels either, and that he had had no sort of dealings with those or any other rebels at any time. So the scent is lost again!

There is a well-known market for rifles in Northern India; men will pay the rifle's weight in silver coin to get possession of one in the hinterland of the Persian Gulf; but that is an interdicted market, and men who run guns up there do so at the peril of their lives; Mr. Bannerman has never had a price set on his head yet, and his life and reputation are surely too valuable to be risked in a venture of that kind, even if the volume of trade were sufficient to tempt him, which it is not.

So we are faced with the problem of an honorable business man, who owns the largest private arsenal in the world and who could fit up two or three army corps from stock, who is constantly buying fresh naval and military stores, and yet who apparently possesses no adequate market for his goods.

He seems quite cheery and comfortable about it, however, and no doubt the size of his bank-account would prove that he keeps his stock-in-trade moving at a profit. The solution is probably delightfully simple, and it is conceivable that the Portuguese Monarchists at Viterbo might be able to throw some light on it; they must have bought their arms from somewhere. Mr. Bannerman won't give them away, though, and most likely they will reciprocate.

The only way to thrash the secret out would be to do like Mr. Bannerman and learn the secrets of Europe and Asia first; beginning in that way one might be able to trace the devious movements of the cases full of arms and ammunition. Certainly it would be worth half a lifetime's toil in getting acquainted with the ins and outs of old-world politics, for besides learning all that, the student would have the key to what is undoubtedly the most amazing business in the world. Perhaps, too, you would learn the secret of youth, as Mr. Bannerman has done.

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The Woman in the Veil

A tale of Dick and Captain Doricot

by H. C. Bailey

IT IS to be regretted that among the many matters which Richard Rymingtowne left on record in his papers at Assynton—he was a neat and methodical man—there is not to be found his opinion of Captain Doricot. That he knew himself much better adapted for success in this world than Doricot is obvious. I make no doubt that he thought Doricot foolishly fantastic, dangerously weak—which is natural; for more than once Doricot was nearly the end of him. Yet there are some signs that his passionately practical mind admired Doricot more than any other man. I can not wholly account for this by recalling that it was Doricot who taught him all he knew of seamanship.

In that matter, at least, Doricot was thorough. Probably he found some amusement in making a fellow so pleased with himself as Dick Rymingtowne understand how little he knew. Not only Doricot and the boatswain and the gunner wrought with him, but he was given to the younkers to take aloft—he was sick for the first time in his life in the maintop; and to the swabbers to take below—in the stenches of the orlop he was sick for the last time in his life.

They made a good run from Bristol to Cadiz, for it took them less than three weeks. At the end of that time Dick was confident that he had no more to learn

IN THE September ADVENTURE there was a story called "Black Magic," with its scene laid in England just before the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The hero was of a kind new to fiction—Dick, a hulking lout of a Berkshire shepherd, generally regarded as a bit lacking in his wits. But the reader gradually sees that Dick is very far from lacking in his wits. Hidden under his stupid manner and appearance is a master mind in craft, generalship and knowledge of human nature. In "Black Magic" Dick cleverly saves Gabriel Rymingtowne, lord of Assynton Manor, from the murderous plot of a relative who covets his estates and his daughter. It becomes evident that Dick loves Mary Rymingtowne. Therefore, he goes forth to win his fortune. In "The Venture of Captain Doricot" (March) Dick meets with an adventurer who knows an opportunity for a rich voyage to the Orient, but has neither ship nor gold nor men. By force of wits and hands, they gain a sum of money and set out together for Bristol, each recognizing in the other a useful companion. "The Alderman's Voyage" (April) tells how Dick and Doricot secure the good ship *Toby* for their venture, and kidnap its owner, the fat and pursy Alderman. THE EDITOR.

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about ships or the sea. Thence they spent ten days in coming to Majorca. Doricot had no intention of going there, but the winds were contrary, and the *Toby*, like other ships of her day, would not work to windward handily.

At the end of those ten days Dick was in a state of grace, convinced that of sea and ship he knew nothing. After a week waiting for a fair wind at Majorca, where they were all very ill of drinking the wine of the country, the *Toby* sailed for the African coast and her proper business.

They were off Tripoli when the wind went round to the east again. While they beat to and fro, out of the east came another ship. She was a big thing. The castles at her bow and stern towered vastly higher than the *Toby's*. As she ran before the wind, she was pitching wildly. At first Doricot turned up his nose at her.

"Spaniard," quoth he. "Look you, Diccon, the tub's a floating sermon against pride. She's as top-heavy as the stiff Don Dismallos themselves."

But then he whistled between his teeth and took a step forward. Staring with puckered eyes through the glittering air, he saw a flutter of green and silver at the mastheads, and then, blazoned all across the square sails, the crescent of Mohammed and Turk and Moor. He said nothing for a while, but stared still at the towering, laboring ship and licked his lips.

Till the end, I suppose, that first sea-fight was vivid in Dick's mind. It was the exemplar of many another. It was as brilliant as the scene—the clear, swift air that glittered as though it were all light, the sapphire, foam-flecked sea, with a myriad rainbows dancing in the spray; the towering, laboring ship to shoreward and the flaming color of the land beyond, gold sand and white and red rock, and a bright mosaic of green and mountains crimson and gray, bold against the blue distance. Everything, near or far, ship and tufted palm and mountain, stood out as sharply as the bulwarks under his hand.

The boatswain had piped to quarters. By the long guns in the waist stood canvas tubs of powder and buckets of water, and, over the water, ropes of match smoldered and hissed. The guns' crews were stripped to the waists and ready. But Doricot, standing by the wheel, gave no orders. The Turkish ship plunged on her way, and not till she had gone to leeward was the fight begun. Doubtless, she expected no ill from a craft that was plainly no warship.

She was first aware of danger when a gun roared and her foremast swayed and crashed down. Another shot rent her forecastle. She answered gallantly enough. Before the long guns of the *Toby* could fire again—it was some ten minutes—she let off a whole battery. But Doricot had made no mistake. Like all the ships of her Spanish build, she carried no guns in all her armament with the range of the English ordnance. She was meant to fight at close quarters, and Doricot would not let her close. He had her to leeward and he kept away, out of reach of her shot, and pounded her at his leisure till she was a shapeless mass of wreckage.

AFTER her guns had fallen silent, after all her masts had gone by the board, his guns rent her till at last a white flag fluttered wildly from the poop. Then he put his helm over, and the *Toby*, without a splinter torn from her, came down on her helpless prey. On poop and forecastle he had his crew ready with pikes, save a few marksmen who took muskets into the tops. But there was little need.

The hull of the Turk was gaping with a score of wounds from water-line to bulwark. She was down by the stern, and when she pitched in the swell her bows rose high out of the water, as though she would sink stern foremost. The *Toby* ran alongside and grappled her. The timbers chafed and ground, and the boarders climbed her shattered, towering bows. They found none to fight. The ship from stem to stern lay a welter of wreck and slaughter. Guns and guns' crews were beaten down beneath masses of shattered timber.

What few of the Turks were left with blood enough yet in them to stand lurked here and there, aloof from one another, motionless, dazed, as though purpose and power to act were frightened out of them. They were driven together easily as sheep, and their arms were taken from them and they made no sign. Doricot plied them with questions of whence they came, whither they were bound, what was their freight, but all his languages—and he used four—found them deaf and dumb.

"If I were of your black blood, I should see if fire and hook would make you speak!"

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he cried, and struck at the set, dull, swarthy faces with the flat of his sword. They neither winced nor moved, and he stamped his foot and hissed abuse at them.

Dick stared. It was not like Doricot to break out so, and the cause seemed wholly inadequate.

Doricot turned away and bade drive the fellows aboard the *Toby* and lash them upon the orlop. Then he sent a party to cut through the wreckage and find what the Turks had in their hold, and he left the boatswain in command and went back to the *Toby* and his cabin, and there sat biting his nails. In a little while Dick came to tell him that there was in the cargo silk of all sorts, both raw and wrought, and carpets the like of which never were seen in England, and spices and perfumes.

"Get the trash aboard," said Doricot carelessly.

Dick gaped.

"You'm high and mighty. Boatswain saith as no ship out of England had ever such a prize. Be you well in your stomach?"

Doricot briefly cursed him and the prize and the boatswain.

"Master Alderman, he will have it as they silks be worth their own weight in gold. He's so happy as a wasp in a plum."

Doricot bade him to the devil, and started up and thrust him out, and followed on his heels.

The crew were bustling zealously about the bales and rolls of merchandise, and all the waist of the ship was cumbered with them and their work. The air was full of noise. Down the shattered side of the Turkish ship tackle groaned and shrieked, and from high above came the rollicking shouts and song of the boarders despoiling her. From the depths of the *Toby's* hold song and shout answered.

Alderman Fry, happy for the first time since he lost sight of Bristol, was feverish, with knife and marlinspike, bursting open timber and canvas to pass judgment on the goods within, and he cried out:

"Stand to it, boys, stand to it! Here's good measure for a twenty thousand pound or more!"

"There's the soul of a hog," quoth Doricot, and, as he passed, kicked him over.

The Alderman sat up and stared after him, dumb in amazed indignation. Doricot strutted on to the poop, and thence barked at his crew angry abuse for sloth.

"I didn't know as you had such a mountain of soul," Dick drawled by his elbow.

Doricot turned on him with an oath.

"What's your will?" said Dick placidly. "You'm that sore in your tempers. To be sure, I'd ha' thought 'e might be a good fellow to-night, having come by what 'e came for."

Doricot condemned him for a fool:

"D'ye think I came to sea to fill your vile bellies?"

Dick chuckled:

"Nay, not till you had yourn running over. But here be enough to fill you, surely?"

"Mine innocent," Doricot took hold of him, "belike I will give up all this and more, and nor you nor I a penny the richer."

"Belike you'll grow wings," Dick chuckled.

"*Himmeldonner!*" Doricot cried. "Did ye take me for a huckstering hog like him yonder?"

"Nay, a naughtier beast nor him. Else 'e might ha' whistled for me."

"Bah, there's no spice of spirit in you!" quoth Doricot.

Dick scratched his head and grinned:

"And how long ha' you been a saint, if you please? And if you be, what be you doing at sea?"

DORICOT did not answer. He stared away over the darkening sea to the violet void of the horizon. The wind was falling as night came, and the sea grew quiet. The ships still gave to the swell, but lightly, and there was no foam nor spray, nor any sound of breakers from the fading land. The noise of the cargo and the shouting seamen about them came like a puny insult to the gathering calm. Doricot turned.

"You are a clever lad, God help you," said he. "*Mon ami*, I could wish you no worse than to get all you want."

Dick gaped at him.

"Hark ye now," he continued. "In the bagnios at Alexandria there's a man that's more than brother to me. And more than all the world holds, my child. We were boys with Cabota, and gunners in the *Holy Cross* when she went to Candia and Chio. Madonna, we knew how to be young!" He looked up at Dick with a queer smile. "You should learn that, child. We lived, those nights among the vines in Zante. Then one

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had to grow clever like you. Old Martin of the Leadenhall in London picked him out for a ship, and I would not serve under him for covetous envy of his place, and so we parted ten year since."

"Ay, you'm a great age to be sure," Dick sniggered.

Doricot was deaf:

"Since ten years I have not seen him. And last year he was taken, he and his ship, by the filthy renegado Kheyr-ed-Din, whom they call Redbeard. The galleys took him in to Alexandria, and there he lies in the bagnio. It cost me what I had to buy that news of a Venetian. Now, with all I can win, we go to Alexandria to buy Matt Winkfield!"

Dick gaped:

"'Tis like as if you would go with a beefsteak into a lion's mouth to look for your brother that's eaten."

"Ay, you're a clever lad," Doricot laughed sharply. "The right stuff not to make a captain."

He turned and shouted angrily to the boatswain to be short and have done.

The sun lay on the water's edge, and all the west was gleaming gold. Doricot stood and looked into the light awhile, then turned and, strutting to the stern, gazed out at the darkening east. From the captured ship came a roar of laughter and shouts, and then a great cheer, and men ran to her shattered bulwarks, yelling ribaldry as a bundle swung outboard.

Doricot hissed a little Spanish and looked over his shoulder. The bundle betrayed itself a woman. She was—or she had been —mysteriously swathed in saffron, but as she swayed and twisted and struggled at the end of the tackle there was no mystery left to hide the floating trousers and close bodice of Turkish seraglios. The dark veil that shrouded her face remained faithful. She arrived with a thud, groveling on the *Toby's* deck, and the seamen swarming about her gave a cheer for "Molly Breeches!"

Then Doricot came, with vehement oaths and hands, and they fled in disorder, leaving him in the midst, over the prostrate veiled woman. She was in no hurry to rise. She drew the saffron cloak about her as she lay till it hid her again, and yet revealed more than it hid—a rich, stately form. Then she raised herself on her arm and looked up at Doricot, her eyes flashing from the depths of her veil. Doricot made her a sweeping bow and spoke in a patois of Italian and Greek:

"The Sultana is fortunate to come aboard my ship."

She laughed:

"I—I am always fortunate. But you will suffer gloriously." And again she laughed.

"I thank you," Doricot bowed again. "To suffer gloriously—what else is life, Sultana?"

"Christian!" she said with contempt.

"Nay, you guess like a fool."

"You—" she rose with slow considered grace—"you talk like a slave."

Doricot shook his head, smiling condescension:

"The Sultana knows little of slaves. They allowed you none, doubtless. And yourself has not been a slave long enough. Patience, patience!"

She drew back from him, a veiled statue of pride; and there was another roaring cheer from the captured ship, and another bundle swayed in the air. To the shriek of the tackle it rushed down and came with a thud at Doricot's feet, and was disintegrated into two women!

THESE had no mystery. Unveiled, coarsely clad, they were plainly slaves of little account. One was a negress or mulatto, shapeless, though she seemed young, the other white and old in years or in slavery. The mulatto lay wailing and rubbing herself till the veiled woman flung an order at her. Then she staggered to her feet and stood trembling. The other slave showed neither pain nor fear on her wasted face. With dull eyes she stared at Doricot.

Doricot began to laugh:

"The world mocks you, Sultana. This morning these were your slaves. Now, behold, you are slave to them. Go, wash their feet!"

"You do not know how little you are, little man," she said coldly. "What can you do? Kill me? Kill me, then."

"If I find it will help me, Sultana, I will kill you with great content. But first I will try what you can do for me alive. As to our fair friends here, you need not be their body servant—yet!"

He called a seaman and bade him take the two slaves below.

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"Give me your hand."

She hesitated, holding aloof, but, when he plucked her arm out of her robe, made no resistance. He looked down at the hand hardly darker than his own, long and shapely, with nails stained rosy.

"So, you are not black, then. That is well."

She stamped her foot and screamed, "Boor!"

"Doricot laughed and drew her away from the gaping seamen and their noise to the silent twilight of the stern walk.

"Now, Sultana. From whose harem do you come, or for whose were you bound?"

"I do not answer slaves."

Doricot shrugged.

"You are a fool in grain. If I ask you without a cord about your head, or a match between your fingers, it is but to save myself trouble."

"No torture would make me speak!" she cried.

"You may be even such a fool as that. For a *zecchin* either of your slaves would tell me all that you can tell."

She snatched herself away from him and stood with heaving bosom.

"I am called Arsace, and I come a gift from the Sultan Soliman to Dragut-Reis. Be sure Dragut will hunt you down and have vengeance for this."

"Are you worth it?" quoth Doricot coldly. "Let me see your face." As she drew away, he caught her veil. "Come, shall I be your tirewoman?"

She gave a passionate cry, and then tore the veil aside and showed him a Greek face of rich beauty, all aflame with rage.

"You will serve," said Doricot coldly. "You may go down to your sisters."

She started back, surprise in her anger now.

"Ah, you are not a man, you are a Christian!"

She tossed her head, and her hands worked nervously, and she stared out over the sea.

Doricot laughed:

"Did you think I should bow down to your pink and white? I am for better things."

But as she gazed eastward into the gathering dark, her look, her bearing changed. She turned to him, all sign of anger gone, eager, cajoling.

"You make me ashamed, signor. You humble me. For less than I have said to you, a Turk would have had me flogged till I bled! And I am your slave. Do not use me hard. Do not put me in chains!"

She fell down and kissed his feet.

Doricot looked down at her with a sneering smile.

"Madonna! What dogs they make of their women!" he said in English. And then in the patois: "Chains? Not I, lass. You are worth too much."

"My lord will not use me hardly?" she sighed. "Indeed, I can not bear it. I am used to soft lying and ease."

"Ay, that's how you're bred," quoth Doricot with contempt. "Come down. You shall have a cabin, you and your women."

"My women may be with me?" she cried. "My lord, you are noble to your slave."

"Have done!" quoth Doricot, and then in English: "Now before I liked you, but now you make me sick."

So he turned her over to a younker and bade him lock the three of them in the cabin next his own and give them all they needed.

The darkness of a clear night was coming down. The boatswain shouted for lanterns. Doricot called to him to make an end, and paced the poop watching the sky to windward, though the wind was almost gone. Then Dick at his elbow drawled out:

"You'm taking a wife or so, seemly."

"Yes, my lord, I never take less than three at once." Doricot spoke carelessly. He had checked and was staring through the gloom. He ran to the starboard quarter and yelled an order to the boatswain: "All hands aboard! All hands aboard! Douse your lights, Antony. Rot and burn you for lubberly knaves! Aboard, I say! Lights out, there!"

II

THE men began to swarm back, chattering noisily. Younkers ran up the rigging and hither and thither, and soon the *Toby*, which had been aflame as though a flight of stars were settling upon her, lay dark.

Dick, looking where Doricot had looked, saw far off a dark craft low in the water, rigged in no fashion that he knew, for their sails were like birds' wings. They seemed to move more swiftly than the failing wind.

He turned to ask Doricot why they should

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bring panic, but Doricot was down in the waist, talking to the boatswain. Already the Turkish ship was cast off, already the younkers were up aloft making sail. The last of the captured cargo was tumbled hastily below. The gunner was mustering his men again.

Under full sail the *Toby* began to move slowly. Dick turned to look for the strange craft astern. Each moment it was darker, and he could hardly make them out. But it seemed they were gaining. He heard Doricot say:

"Keep close. Cover your matches," and Doricot and the boatswain climbed to the poop.

"What's yon?" said Dick, pointing.

Doricot peered through the gloom and swore at the wind.

"What's yon?" Dick said again.

"Galleys, you fool," the boatswain grunted. "Here's a pretty business, surely," he whistled dolefully. "We'm nought against they, Captain. They'm the big chaps. Four hundred to each of 'em, to my thinking."

Doricot stamped.

"Give me a wind, and I'll sink every galley that ever came out of Algiers."

"The Lord hath no mind to do such, seemly," quoth the boatswain. "Please the Lord they'll miss we. I'll go see we be all dark."

Dick knew enough to know the danger. The galleys of the Moorish pirates were to the seamen who ventured into the Mediterranean like a pestilence. If chance were kind, a ship might not meet them, but, if they came down upon a ship, no skill nor daring could save her. In rough weather, indeed, they were impotent. With a brisk wind a cunning captain could, unless he were caught on a lee shore, hold his own or do better. But in calm or light winds they had over sailing ships the mastery of steam. They could maneuver at will while their prey waited them immobile. They could come down upon her when they chose and as they chose.

Two hundred slaves or more heaved at a big galley's oars. Two hundred fighting men crowded forecastle and stern. They carried light guns and few, for it was not gunnery that won their fights. If they were hard pressed, they might dash their beaked bows into a ship and so make an end. But for the most part they chose to run alongside and set their swarms of fighting men aboard the enemy.

No ship upon the seas, save the huge fighting craft of Genoa and Venice, and the Knights of Malta (and from them the galleys fled at speed), could hope for victory then. None could muster a crew to stand against the numbers of the Moors. It must be one to five at best, more likely one to ten, and a fight against wild creatures who knew no fear of death, no care for life, who in the frenzy of fight were unchecked by the ghastliest wounds.

For those whom they took alive there waited the slavery of the bagnio, wearing toil for masters who made cruelty their sport; or a harder life still, chained on the galley bench, naked to the sun and wind and spray, tortured always by hunger and thirst, heaving and straining at the oars beneath a lash that would cut deeper and deeper as the body weakened till it had carved a way for death.

The *Toby* lay dark and silent, hardly moving for all her spread of sail. Her guns were manned and ready, and all her crew stood to arms along the bulwarks. From the poop Doricot and Dick peered astern. The galleys were lost in the dark, but the beat of their oars came clear, and nearer and still nearer.

"Sink them, they are steering straight upon us!" Doricot muttered. "*Teufelsholle*, do we show light, then?"

He was rushing forward when the boatswain came puffing up.

"The women had a lantern by their porthole!" he panted. "Young Billy Matthews give they a light. Said as you bade un give all they axed for. The one in the veil seed a lantern and snatched un as he took she down."

Doricot bit his teeth on an oath.

"You had it doused?" he said.

He understood now the sudden change in madame's manners. Doubtless she had caught sight of the galleys while she kept him in play and made her plan to give them signal. She was yet more Oriental than he had thought.

"Please God the heathen ha' not seen it!" said the boatswain.

There was no answer. They listened to the oar-beat nearer and nearer yet, and heard above it the yells of the overseers, the whistle of their whips.

"Straight upon us!" Doricot muttered.

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"Line ahead," and he looked at the boatswain.

"Line ahead," the boatswain agreed gruffly.

The galleys were straight astern and one behind the other, so that only if the *Toby* could turn from her course could she bring a gun to bear.

Doricot ran forward and caught the wheel and spun it. The ship had no steerage way and could not answer.

"Fire down into them as they come alongside!" he yelled.

Then the galleys came, shooting up on either quarter with a sudden storm of noise, grappling-irons crashing, the oars straining and groaning with a great gurgle of water, amid the wild battle shouts of the Moors.

Suddenly, as lanterns were plucked from hiding, the long, low hulls flamed light and were seen teeming with men, crowded and busy as a startled ant-heap. The grappling-irons were hardly fast in the *Toby* before the Moors came swarming up her sides, climbing like cats where there was no foothold, in a mad haste, yet marvelously adroit.

Doricot shouted for his gunners, and on the port side they contrived to depress the long pieces enough to fire down into the heart of the galley. Then there was tumult in her, and she fell off. But the starboard guns could not be brought to bear on the other, and in a moment the *Toby* was flooded with her swordsmen.

There was no more firing, for the gun crews were cut down before they could load again. There was no fighting, for the *Toby's* scanty company were whirled back and beaten down beneath a weight of numbers that could have crushed them without stroke of scimitar or spear!

A crowded medley of white coats and steel almost as white, spear and scimitar and corselet, a tempest of shrill shouts, a moment's hacking and hewing and thrusting, with heart and head a-throb as though they must break, a moment's consciousness of swarthy faces distorted and foaming—then nothingness! No more than that any man of her crew could have told of the capture of the *Toby*.

5

WHEN Dick woke, he was beneath dead men. He thrust up through them, and as the mist was drawn from his eyes and dizziness left him, he heard splashing and saw the Moors casting the corpses of his shipmates into the sea. Before he could rise, before he knew what wounds he had, lean, swarthy arms grasped at him and he was dragged along the deck, over weapons and blood. He began to struggle as his strength came back, but a blow fell upon his mouth and a dark face bent over him, hissing, and he was shown a dagger. His will yielded, and he fell limp and they bound him and flung him overboard.

A jerk that seemed for a moment to shake head from body surprised him with the knowledge that he was not yet to drown. He found himself hanging at the end of a rope over the galley. He looked down upon the crowded slaves, and the rope was paid out swiftly and he shot down among them to be brought up with a jerk again, and seized and flung down upon the deck. A Moor knelt upon him and cut the rope from him, leaving him lashed and helpless. He was flung down a hatch into fetid darkness. He fell on something softer than wood and heard a grunt, and, as he bounced on harder stuff, an oath.

"You'm Doricot, to be sure," said he. "Who's the fat one?"

"You fell on me, fool!" the Alderman grunted.

"T' Alderman's peevish, lad. Singing for his supper, as you might say," this was the boatswain's husky voice.

"It's a wicked thing," the Alderman cried. "They take us and despoil us, and then fling us to starve in this den. Filthy heathen!"

"To be sure, how many be we?" Dick cried.

"Four, with you," quoth the boatswain. "Ben't enough to man an oar for them. There's a pity!"

"We are enough to do something yet," said Doricot in a low voice. "Nick Doricot is among you."

"Oh, you're clever at finding a way, if you were not so good at losing it," the Alderman grumbled. "Twenty thousand pound we had at sunset!"

He groaned again.

"It was the heathen's at dawn," the boatswain chuckled. "And now it's the heathen's again. Aw, it's a wicked thing, a seesaw."

But Doricot said:

"Twenty lives we had that are gone. I keep my own accounts, mynheer."

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JUST then a light came over the hatch, and they saw a face something pale to be a Moor's.

"Which of you dogs is the Captain?" it said in the Greek-Italian patois.

"If your Captain would ask my pardon, renegado, go and fetch him," quoth Doricot.

The face vanished and they heard an order given. Bearing lanterns, two negroes all but naked slid through the hatch and caught Doricot and hoisted him up and vanished after him.

He was carried, so he told them in the long days that came after, to the galley's great cabin. The negroes set him down kneeling, and shrank out. He could not stand, for his legs were bound, and he did not care to kneel to anything in this world, so he rolled over and lay at his ease, leaning against the bulkhead. There was laughter, and as his eyes grew used to the light, he saw the veiled woman sitting on a divan, and her slaves standing beside.

Two men sat opposite her, one a big, loose-made fellow of bushy black beard, the other smaller but very square, with beard and mustaches lank and oiled, a Greek if his face told true. Both were richly clad and bejeweled on turban and breast. The cabin was a mess of luxury. Silks and brocades hung and fell in gaudy disorder. There were things of silver and gold on the table, and in corners on the floor lay others. The table blazed with lamps.

"Is this the little dog?" the Greek said.

"It lies there," said the woman, and gave a little cruel laugh.

"Ha, slave," quoth Doricot, with a grin, "have you found some to like your sleek face better than I did?"

She turned to the mulatto behind her. "Go, strike him on the mouth till it bleeds!" And, when it was done, "So we whip curs!" she said, and laughed again.

"It is marvelous," said Doricot, "how you always make yourself despicable." One of the men barked a threat at him. "Your turn shall come, swine," he said placidly, and looked at the woman again. "Prithee, go on. I like you better in this hangman vein than cowering and cringing at my feet. There is something to laugh at now."

"Cringe!" she laughed out loud. "Little proud fool, do you not know yet how I trapped you? Do you think I would have spoken you one fair word but to cheat you and ruin you? Why, it was these galleys of Dragut's that made me cringe, not your little, strutting folly. I saw them while you saw nothing, my great sea Captain, and played with you to win myself the chance of making them signal. It was the light you gave me that brought them down on you. It's I who have beaten you, and have you there to make me sport!"

Doricot shrugged as well as he could in his bonds and looked at the men.

"What do you heathen do with a crowing hen?"

The Greek began to laugh:

"What shall we do with you, my friend? There's enough for you to think of. Flay you, or hang you on the hooks, or bleed you? If we keep you for Dragut, he'll burn you finger by finger."

"What!" Doricot cried quickly. "What, because I did not rid him of that woman? Now that is hard measure. But God knows I'll not blame the man! I have seen her face."

The men looked at each other and at the woman, and at each other again. It was obvious that they found Doricot's method startling. The woman quivered.

"Yes, you have seen me unveiled, dog!" she said in a low voice. "Dragut will not forgive you that!"

"I'll not blame him," quoth Doricot. "If I had to take a wife like you, I would have no man see my misfortune."

She turned passionately on the men.

"Will you let me hear this?" she cried. "Is the dog to live?"

"You bade him here," said the Turk stolidly.

"He is for Dragut, not us," quoth the Greek, and clapped his hands. When the negroes entered, "bear him back to the others," he said.

Doricot nodded to the men as he was borne out.

"My good fellows, I am sorry for you."

As he went, he heard the woman's voice shrill. He was well satisfied with himself. Now Dragut's men knew, and Dragut must be told, what the woman would have kept secret, that a man had seen her unveiled. Therefore they would not kill him, but save him for Dragut. It might mean a far worse death, but at least it meant some days' more life, and it must mean that Dragut would have none of the woman. For a man had seen her unveiled, a man had mocked at her naked face. She was no more worthy to be a pasha's wife. She was paid.

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He was thrown back upon his companions in the shallow, nauseous hold.

"What's the news with you?" Dick said.

"Only madame wanted to make love to me," quoth Doricot, and wriggled to lay himself more easily. "I am for sleep."

Sleep was hard to win. Not only hunger and thirst, not only the cramp and pain of their bonds troubled them, but overhead there was every moment the clank of chains as the slaves stirred and turned on their benches. Louder than the chain-clank came groaning. Some wretch, wounded or smarting from the whip, or in the torture of one of the thousand diseases that haunted the galleys, had lost all mastery of himself.

For hours, as it seemed, they listened. The boatswain swore at the man jovially. The Alderman had gone to sleep and Dick was dozing when there came a clear, imperious voice. Doricot sat up. It was the veiled woman.

"The noise disturbs me, I say. See that it ends at once."

Then a murmur, then a smooth, "It shall end, madame."

"See that it be done, Lucia," she commanded.

Heavy steps overhead, and a faint gleam of lantern-light across the hatch, then a clang of metal, a shriek and a splash. The groaning ceased.

"What is it, now?" said Dick drowsily.

"They ha' flung the poor devil overboard in his chains. Why, he was spoiling madame's beauty sleep!"

"There's a wench," Dick drawled.

Something fell down the hatch.

"What now?" he cried.

"Silent!" Doricot hissed.

He began to wriggle along the planks, feeling slowly, laboriously, with his body. He lay upon what he sought. His hand closed on the helve of an ax.

III

YOU imagine how his heart jumped. But he made no sound. He turned and pressed the edge on the rope that bound him. He was free, and stretching his limbs and rubbing them. Back he came to the others.

"No man speaks a word but I," he whispered, and set them free. "Now will we free the slaves," he said. "Follow. Who makes a sound as we go cuts his own throat!"

On the boatswain's back he stood and peered warily out of the hatch. The lanterns were gone. There was no light, save at bow and stern. No one moved among the oar benches. There was no sound but the endless clank of the chains as the sleepers stirred and turned.

He hauled himself up, and Dick after him, and leaving the others to do their own business, crept forward, scanning the slaves keenly. By a brawny fellow amidships he paused, and put a hand on the naked shoulder, murmuring in patois:

"Friend, friend! One of the English come to set you free. I've a hatchet. If I split the bench, can you do the rest? Silent, silent!"

The man gave a hoarse chuckle, and muttered in his comrade's ear and he again to the next, till the whole oar's crew were told. They were chained to the bench by body and leg, but, since they must have freedom to row, not closely.

"Clank your chains, clank your chains!" Doricot muttered and swung the ax and the sound of the blow was lost. Again he struck, and again, and then as the whole oar's crew flung themselves on their chains together, the bench split and the bolts were torn out and they were free, save that their chains must go with them where they went.

"Can you find tools and weapons?" Doricot muttered. "We must free the rest, or you are lost."

The big man whom he had roused first clapped him on the shoulder.

"Be easy, brother, be easy," he said, and took a great piece of the broken bench and ran forward.

"The others, the others!" one gasped at Doricot's elbow, and to the next bench he went.

By this time Dick and the boatswain and the Alderman were up with him, and over his shoulder he said: "Keep close about me. We'll give the heathen what will keep them busy!" and he swung the hatchet again and another crew was loosed.

Back came the big man, panting, with a scimitar under his arm and mallet and chisel.

"I ha' broke the sentry's head, brother!" he gasped. "Here be the tools from the locker. And none's heard but him that's dead."

"Fall to it!" cried Doricot. "Fall to it!"

The big man turned on the men who were free, and swore at them:

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"Get forward and kill, I say! What, would you have the wire in your flesh again? Get forward and kill!"

"Let some go aft," Doricot called, and swung his hatchet again, and, breaking themselves clubs from the benches, forward and aft they went, breathing deep.

Now full half the slaves were awake and aware. Yet they made little noise. There was a murmur of eager talk, but no more, no cries nor shouting. On the galley benches a man learned to wait, or died: and calmly they waited the will of this man of miracle. Once free, the most of them were transfigured. They thrust upon one another and struggled in the narrow way to come at their masters quickly. But still they spoke little. There was no time, no use for words till they had their vengeance.

It was all done in the dark or half darkness of a starry night. The sea lay still and black. The dim shapes of the two tall sailing ships, the long low hull of the second galley loomed to shoreward. Where Doricot worked among the oarsmen's benches, the naked men sprang up and pressed upon one another and surged on. Soon there was noise enough.

On platforms fore and aft, the Moorish swordsmen lay, almost as crowded as their slaves. The first of these freed slaves fell to work and clubbed and slew men who still slept, but soon there was alarm, soon a trumpet sounded, and shouts rose and the clash of arms. By that, the first of the slaves had won arms from the dead. Each minute brought others to aid them. The fight was without mercy or honor.

The slaves had nothing to fear save being taken alive. They had dark cruelty to avenge. Man for man—since they were men who had lived through the toil of the oar—they overmatched the Moors. In numbers, as each moment brought them reinforcement from the crowded benches, they had the advantage. It was not a butchery. The Moors fought desperately. But it was more like a fight of wild beasts than a fight of men.

BEFORE all the slaves were freed, Doricot gave over the work to their comrades, and with his little company close about him pushed forward.

"Leave the bulls to the dogs, my lads," quoth he. "A boat, now, where's a boat?"

They found one stowed inboard just forward of the oars, and while the fight in the bows roared on above them, they had her into the water and dropped over side.

The other ships were waking. From the second galley lanterns waved in signal and shouts came again and again. There was no answer but the crash and growl of the fight. Lights moved on the *Toby* and her new crew hailed their comrades wildly. Doricot chuckled.

"Shout, ay, shout again! Peradventure they sleep and must be awakened."

Standing in the stern of the boat, he fisted her along the galley's side.

"What be doing?" Dick cried.

"Who bade you speak?" quoth Doricot. "Give me an oar, booby."

They were under the portholes of the great cabin from which broad bands of light streamed over the sea. For a moment Doricot's keen face stood out white. Then he moved aside and raised the oarblade. The glass of the porthole was shivered. He called out,

"What, Arsace! What, Madame Arsace!"

In the roar of the fight above he hardly heard his own voice.

But the veiled woman came to the porthole and looked out. For a moment, as she stood in the light and he in the darkness, she could not see him, and she cried in a clear, quivering voice:

"Who is it? Who calls?"

"Come and see," Doricot laughed. "Come and see, and be saved."

At that Dick caught his ankle with a "That's a pretty thing now! Ha' done and sit down and give way!"

But Doricot dropped the oar loom on his knuckles.

The woman had drawn back a little, and stood muttering to herself. Behind her Doricot saw the worn, white face of the elder of her slaves. It was smiling.

"I have played out your game, my lass," Doricot laughed. "I ha' freed myself, I ha' freed the slaves. They'll be upon you swiftly. Come, there's no life for you but here. *Madre Dios*! not Barbarossa himself was ever worse to Christian woman than the gallerians to a Turkish lass that they win. Come, I say!"

But she drew back again, muttering:

"You freed them! You won free!"

"I gave him an ax!" It was the old slave behind her who spoke. She whirled

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round. "Ay, my pretty madame, I gave him an ax. I set him free. Because he dared flout you and mock you. Thank God, I ha' broken you in the end!"

A moment they stared at each other, the slave with a sneering smile. Then the veiled woman struck at her and they struggled together.

Overhead the din of the fight was broken with mad yells of triumph. There was a scurry of feet and shouts coming nearer and then a thunder at the door of the cabin. The veiled woman tore herself free and rushed to the arms that hung upon the bulkhead.

Doricot shouted passionately:

"Come, fools, come to me and I'll save you!"

But the slave cried: "Go your ways, Englishman! Your work's done. She's not for you, nor I neither," and she rushed upon the woman, who was putting a scimitar to her throat. "You shall not kill yourself!" she shrieked. "Your father struck me down when I would have killed myself, when he flogged my husband to death! You shall not kill yourself, I say! You, too, you shall be a slave! Ah, my God, I have lived for this!"

So they were locked about the scimitar when the gallerians broke in.

But already, with a mutter of "Here's enough of your games," Dick had pushed the boat off and bent to his oars. Doricot sat himself down, grumbling and muttering to himself.

As they drew away, a fresh sound came over the water. In the second galley was the groaning of cable and capstan. They could see her moving up to her anchor.

"It's up anchor, is it?" Doricot said, and then lifted up his voice: "Gallerians! Ahoy, gallerians! Cut your cable! Out with your oars! You have the other galley upon you!" Then he turned fiercely upon his own crew, who were resting again on their oars. "Give way, curse your folly, give way! Do you want to be caught between them?"

On both galleys there was a fever of scurrying and shouting. Through the dawn twilight they could see the oars thrust out. Almost at the same moment both began to move. Both made bad weather of it, for the one was lame from the Toby's guns and the slaves in the other had to learn to handle her. There was some clumsy maneuvering which made Doricot cry out:

"God save us! God save us! Here's seamanship!"

The Moors, it was plain, intended their usual tactics, to grapple and board. Whether the slaves meant what they did, Doricot professed always that he could not guess. For just as it seemed that the Moors would run alongside as they sought, the other galley altered her course and, bow to bow, beak upon beak, they crashed and were jammed together.

Even so, the Moorish swordsmen swarmed from forecastle to forecastle, but as they came, the locked bows dipped and dipped and Doricot cried:

"They're sinking, by heaven, they're sinking!"

Still the fight raged. In a moment there was one great roar of despair, as the water rose to the crowded benches. But still on the high forecastle the fight raged; still the Moors pressed fiercely on as though there were something to be won by victory, something lost by defeat; still the gallerians strove against them as though there were danger they might fail of their vengeance, and to the clash and yell of the fight the galleys sank together!

The mellowing light fell upon a sea where beneath the tall ships' shadow there floated only a little scattered timber.

IN THE blaze of noon four men stood on the beach, watching the sail of the *Toby* far away.

"There goes twenty thousand pound," said the Alderman gloomily.

"There goes beef and beer," the boatswain chuckled.

"What's to do?" said Dick.

"There's Alexandria," quoth Doricot, "and a man that's my brother to come out o' prison."

"We be near as naked as we were born," the Alderman grumbled.

"The better the venture!" cried Doricot. "Without a ship, without a weapon, *en avant, mon ami, en avant!*"

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A Charge to Keep

by Hapsburg Liebe

THE regiment to which Little Malone belonged had been in the Philippines but a month, and its men were not yet hardened to the miasmas of the lowlands or to the burning streams from the tropical sun. Its officers, save the Colonel and the Majors, had never scented the smoke of battle until they had taken part in the fight at San Mateo, a week after landing; the enlisted men, too, were green, which made it worse for all concerned.

And, though outwardly cheerful, they were missing the home land. They had failed to find in long marches, and mosquitoes, and stinging ants, and dark nights, in drizzling rains on outpost, and in trench the enticing things they had thought to find in a country where Summer never ended. They had grown tired of writing home—when opportunity afforded—that they had been in swimming on Christmas day. They were sick of potatoes, prunes, fat bacon and mud-tasted carabao meat.

Under command of Captain Elfinch, Company B had left the temporary quarters of the regiment—in Catbalogan, on bloody Samar—an hour before dawn, with orders to camp thirty miles up the coast the following night. From there they were to start the next morning for Calviga, an insurgent stronghold three miles away, to assist Captain Farwil's company in surrounding the little town at daybreak, when there would be a surrender or a fight.

Captain Farwil's company had been taken thirty miles beyond Calviga on the Compania Maritima steamer *Brutus*, sailing without lights to land the soldiers under cover of darkness.

By a hard march Company B reached the end of its first day's journey before the sun had gone down. The men, grim, sweating, tired, were lying here and there under the coconut-palms. Some were preparing food; others were too weary to do anything but rest and smoke in silence—and wish.

Little Malone, feeling sorry for himself, stole off, going alone to the beach, which was but a hundred yards away, where he sat down on the sand and removed his hot, dusty shoes. Then he waded out until the wavelets reached his knees, cooling his blistered feet. In the army, when there are two men of the same name in a company, some rude but fitting distinction is always employed; for instance, there were two Malones in Company B, who were known as Big Malone and Little Malone respectively. Given names are rarely heard.

The man standing in the brine—he was little more than a youth—had much cause to be sorry for himself. At the recent fight at San Mateo, when two regiments of infantry and one of cavalry, assisted by a battery of artillery with a string of moun-

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tain-dogs, had stormed the great V-shaped trench on the heights, Little Malone had turned backward at the very moment of victory and in view of anybody who cared to look.

And he had been as an outcast, a blot on the record of his company, a sore on the face of his regiment, since that day. Green soldiers are always ready to pick flaws, and flaws spread in the hands of homesick men. There had been talk of a court-martial to try Little Malone for cowardice. Perhaps his extreme youth saved him.

And Little Malone's only retaliation had been in a few words:

"If you don't like me, you can go to——!"

Thus he found himself better company than he could find among his comrades. He resented at heart the sneers that came to him in every word spoken to him. He heard contempt in the voices of those who essayed the least kindness. He was sensitive, and such kindness lashed his naked heart like whips coated with acid. Once he had drawn back to strike, but the man at whom he aimed had seen something of danger in his keen, gray eyes and hurried away.

When he had cooled his swollen feet he stepped from the water, replaced his coarse shoes with many a wince, went to the edge of the coconut-palms, kindled a fire and fried two thin strips of bacon in his mess-plate of tin. This done, he sliced a potato and put in into the fat, eating the bacon while the potato browned.

STEPS approached from the grove at his back. He turned his head, frowning instinctively and from habit. It was Big Malone, the man he disliked least of all. But even Big Malone's words came in a patronizing tone sometimes, and he always looked pity out of his eyes. To hate pity is as often the hallmark of a man as it is a sign of surliness. Little Malone hated pity as a fanatic hates unrighteous things.

"Well," he growled, "what is it—moving again?"

He was sorry for the gruffness with which he addressed the bigger man, but somehow he couldn't help it. Anyway, Big Malone hadn't the moral courage to chum with him before the others. He disliked moral cowardice as much as he hated pity.

"Moving again," said Big Malone. "Captain Elfinch has decided to go half a mile farther, to a spring the advance guard found, to camp. Thought I'd tell you."

"Much obliged," said the man on the ground, in a tone milder than that that he had used before. "Go ahead. I'll find you.'"

But the bigger man didn't go just then. "Boy," he said, reddening a trifle under his tan, "I want you to tell me why you—did that, at San Mateo."

"I'll tell you this much," replied Little Malone calmly: "I had orders to do what I did before I ever had orders to charge up that infernal hill. That's all I'll tell you. Go ahead with your company!"

He wanted to be alone. Big Malone knew it, and turned away without another word.

After having eaten the last of the browned potatoes, Little Malone wiped out his mess-plate, thrust it into his haversack, kicked the fire down on the sand, and himself turned into the grove of palms. But he did not hurry. He wanted the others to get out of sight before he followed them to the chosen camping-place.

He was thirsty. The water in his canteen had been taken hours before from a carabao wallow and was unfit to drink. He knew the little spring half a mile ahead would be in great demand for an hour, until the dry throats of a hundred thirsty men had been satisfied. He looked toward the umbrella-shaped top of a leaning coconut-palm. A cluster of green coconuts almost caused him to smile. The green coconut is full of milk, which is cool and refreshing on the warmest day.

So the hot, dusty shoes came off again, and Little Malone climbed the leaning palm. With his bayonet he cut away the ends of some of the unripe fruit and drank his fill.

And as he sat in the top of the palm he chanced to look inland.

And as he looked inland, over a mile of dry, guava-covered rice-fields, dumb martyrs to the desolation of war, he saw a dirty-white ribbon of some two hundred men creep along like a giant snake at the foot of a hill and disappear into a bamboo thicket. He knew they were insurgent soldiers, the soldiers of the notorious Luk Ban, the greatest insurrectionist, except Aguinaldo, that ever worried an American.

Luk Ban was a rawboned, evil-eyed, coppery-skinned man whose veins held the blood of the Chinaman, the Filipino and

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the South Sea Islander. He was cunning as a fox, hard at heart as iron, inexorable as fate, always a master fighter and fiercer and more cruel than a Moro.

The string of men clad in dirty-white uniforms were armed only with bolos—long, blunt knives heavier than swords and terrible in the hands of the Filipinos. Little Malone could see that they had no guns; they would have glinted in the fading sunlight. Bolos were carried in bamboo cases.

And Little Malone knew they were following his company. He knew it was the insurgent force from Calviga, an act of cunning to offset cunning. He knew, too, that they would attack Company B under cover of night for a wholesale massacre, as is customary with bolo men. He shuddered as he remembered having heard that, on that same island, a hundred men had fallen to the merciless bolo-men before they were fairly awake—a hundred men in three minutes.

So the outcast hurried to First Sergeant Bailor. Bailor, a priggish man, frowned, as if he were contaminated at being addressed by the man whom he regarded as a poltroon, a coward, a nobody.

"Sergeant," said Little Malone, "I saw about two hundred men with bolos sneaking along the edge of the hills a few minutes ago. They'll attack us to-night."

Bailor laughed outright and boisterously. He beckoned for Corporal Rhoddy.

"Listen to this!" he bawled, so that all heard. "This brave youth has broken the news that he saw two hundred bolo-men a few minutes ago!"

Perhaps the men of Company B thought they were gaining in favor with their first sergeant when they joined in the laughter.

Little Malone reddened. They didn't believe him! Scare-stories were too common, perhaps.

"Then," requested the outcast, "may I have permission to speak to Captain Elfinch?"

"No!" came quickly from the sergeant's lips. "He's in the surf, and he don't want to be bothered. You can't take any such yarn to him anyway. You saw only a bunch of copra-gatherers."

Little Malone turned away, his fingers working nervously at his perspiration-dampened cartridge-belt. He mumbled an imprecation. Sergeant Bailor heard it.

"You're under arrest in quarters, my man!" he said haughtily. "Put up your tent and get into it!"

"All right, sir."

The utter calmness of the little man's reply angered the sergeant.

"Don't talk back to me!" he commanded loudly.

"All right, sir."

"Close your mouth!"

"All right, sir."

Angered almost to rage at Little Malone's demeanor, Sergeant Bailor sprang forward, pinning the outcast's shoulder in a grip as of a vise, jerking him around sharply.

"If you open your mouth to me again," he said huskily, in the way small males have when in authority, "I'll see that a certain matter that occurred a short time ago appears on your discharge papers! Do you get that, you young coward?"

"All right, sir!"

Little Malone stood motionless as one of the trees about them. Only his lips moved when he spoke.

Sneering, beaten, the sergeant loosed the slight shoulder and turned back to his shelter-tent.

II

A SHELTER-TENT is made up of two halves. Each man carries a half, and each tent will accommodate two men. They are so low that one must crawl on hands and knees to get inside. Little Malone halved with Big Malone.

It was almost dark. Lying on his woolen blanket in one of the little canvas houses to escape stinging ants, the soldier called a coward saw the first sergeant place a camp guard of two. It was the common form of running guard—the men were to wake a relief after two hours on duty, and so on throughout the night.

Little Malone shuddered. Two men—two tired, sleepy men! He knew the wily soldiers of wily Luk Ban could steal along in the grass, from one palm to another, and silence those men with a few quick strokes of their deadly bolos without waking one of the company in the little row of shelter-tents. Then there would be a carnage, a shambles. The soldiers of Luk Ban would hack to death the sleepers within three flying minutes. It would be a wholesale mas-

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sacre. It could be nothing else, with two hundred vicious, wide-awake bolo-men against a hundred sleeping Americans.

Big Malone crawled in beside his tent-mate.

"Boy," said he, "is that straight about the gugus?"

"You won't wait long to find out," Little Malone answered sourly.

"Aw, see here," retorted the bigger man, "I don't mean to say you haven't enough sense to know when you see two hundred men. You know I don't. But, kid, they might have been copra-gatherers. If they really were bolo-men, we're in a bad fix with a camp guard of two. Why don't they put out a post?"

"Ask the sergeant," said Little Malone.

"He's got it in for you now," Big Malone said, ignoring the other's suggestion. "If I were you, I'd try to get transferred to another regiment."

In his turn, the lesser man ignored Big Malone's words.

"As soon as it gets dark," he declared, "I'm going out and form a one-man outpost in a palm-tree. It's the only way I can think of to save this fool company. Then—maybe I can redeem myself!"

"It's not in line with orders," objected Big Malone, frowning at the thought of a man losing a whole night's sleep because of a scare-story. "I wouldn't do it."

"But I will, just the same."

"You're under arrest in quarters."

Little Malone swore under his breath.

"Let that go. It's nothing to you. I'll take the consequences. I'm going to get up in a palm and watch. The moon will be up soon, and maybe I can spot them before they get to you fellows."

"Don't do it, boy," growled Big Malone; "you need rest."

Again Little Malone swore under his breath. Even this man believed it was a scare-story.

"But," he asked anxiously, "you won't tell I've gone, will you?"

"No."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Little Malone. "And I've got a notion that you, and the company to a man, will be much obliged to me before you see daylight again."

"I wouldn't mind being obliged to you," returned the big man. "I always did believe in you, boy—except, I'm afraid you are a little too young to judge between natives and soldiers."

"If you believe in me," Little Malone shot back, "why don't you give me a fair deal about this? Why don't you sneak to Captain Elfinch and tell him what I claim to have seen?"

"Bailor would find it out, and he'd never forget it. You see, I'm in line for a corporal's place, son."

"Corporal's place!" Little Malone snorted. "You're not fit for it. It's a pity you are not as big inside as you are outside. You remind me of a goose-neck gourd with the insides dried up. You lack insides. You've been better to me than anybody else in the company; still, you lack insides. You and everybody in the whole outfit thinks I'm a sneak, but before daylight I'm going to show you a little different! I'm going to show you that Little Malone, from Frankfort, Kentucky, has got insides in him! Then maybe I'll tell about the orders I had before I had orders to charge at San Mateo—the ranking orders, you know. Good-night!"

As Big Malone turned over, composing himself for sleep, Little Malone, watching the guard closely, crept from the shelter-tent. Making no sound, he crawled on his hands and knees slowly, carefully, dragging his rifle by the muzzle, through the grass that reached to his eyes, and after five minutes was a hundred feet from the beat of the nearest sentry. Then he rose and skulked off like a thief in the gloom of the grove of palms. He went a quarter of a mile in the direction in which stood the thickets that concealed the men of Luk Ban. There he laboriously climbed a tall but leaning palm. His rifle he was forced to leave on the ground.

AN HOUR passed, and the only sounds that broke the stillness of the tropical night were the gentle swish of the slender leaves about him as they swayed in the breeze of the near-by sea, the occasional chirp of a night-bird, and, now and then, the guttural *wak-wak* of a flying marsh heron.

Slowly the moon rose over the hill at whose base Little Malone had seen the ribbon of bolo-men creeping. He knew, did Malone, that the attack would come shortly, as the moon at its zenith or near to it, would make great the danger of being seen.

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So Little Malone began to watch more keenly, looking for and expecting every second the two hundred figures in dirty-white. He knew they would come creeping, stooping, dodging from tree to tree, their long, hacking knives ready for the work of dealing out a terrible death to men who slept and dreamed with childlike smiles of home and violets and forget-me-nots and moonlight on piano-keys and golden hair and gray. Several palm tops were in the way; he swung outward, now to his right, now to his left, trying to see.

And so another hour passed, and the yellow, hanging moon rose higher in the pale, silent sky, and still Little Malone watched keenly. He knew they would come.

And they did.

Cautiously they came, and slowly, creeping, creeping, making no more noise than so many dirty-white spirits, yet advancing as steadily as the turn of the earth on its axis. One on the ground could not have seen them until they were within a few yards of him.

With a smile that was grim, Little Malone began to descend. He locked his thin, weary legs about the slim, gray trunk and slid quickly to the ground. Evidently the bolo-men did not see him. Then, bending low, he ran toward the camp of his sleeping company. The guard halted him drowsily; he rushed by him and went to the head of Sergeant Bailor's tent, raising the flap as he went to his knees. And in one hand he held a keen-bladed penknife.

"Sergeant!" He shook the sleeping officer. "Sergeant! For God's sake listen! I'm Little Malone—I've been on watch—the insurgents will be here in five more minutes! Sergeant, for God's sake——"

Bailor was awake. He looked with blinking, unbelieving eyes at the slender figure that knelt on the grass in the moonlight but a yard away.

"I told you you were under arrest in quar——"

With a movement as if to open his shirt at the throat, Little Malone slashed his penknife across his breast. A match was ready in the other hand.

"Look at this!" he cried lowly, tremblingly, as the feeble blaze flared up. "I encountered one of the spies just as I saw the main body——"

The sight of blood jarred on Bailor's nerves, and convinced him. Every man was awakened. Quickly they left the little row of tents and took places, kneeling in the shadows of the palms, rifles loaded and ready.

"Not a shot until they begin hacking at the tents!" ordered Captain Elfinch.

It was for that reason that he had stationed his men behind the line of canvas houses. The Filipinos would be in a body and behind nothing.

Little Malone knelt beside his commanding officer.

"Now, you just watch them jump on those tents!" he whispered, happily disregarding the trickling of blood down his chest to his belt. "And while you're watching them, think how they'd have done for us if we were in the tents!"

Little Malone's heart had gone to his head. He was going to prove himself. He was going to fight.

Two minutes passed, and the silence became intense. It was the stillness that comes before a terrific peal of thunder, before a hurricane, when the heavens are black as the Pit. Another minute came and went, and Little Malone thought he heard the crush of grass under human feet.

And suddenly—like one man with two hundred arms—two hundred bolos flashed in the rays of the moon, screamed and swished through the air, and the fifty tents went to the earth hacked and torn to shreds and threads and strings.

"Fire!" bellowed Captain Elfinch, leading the fusillade with his automatic pistol.

A hundred rifles spat forth slender blazes and lead encased in pointed jackets of steel, and, before the Filipinos realized what had happened, they had fired again. Yet again they fired, and the bolo-men left alive threw themselves face downward on the ground and cried for mercy in the name of the Virgin. They were beaten.

Five minutes more saw the surviving soldiers of the attacking party huddled in a group, while a cordon of Americans held guard over them. Then a fire was lighted.

III

BUT the commanding officer failed to find the youth who had saved the lives of the whole company. His face turned gray and hard, though his lips twitched at the corners and his eyes grew moist.

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What had become of Little Malone?

"Where is Little Malone?" he asked huskily.

The first sergeant echoed it.

Those not doing duty guarding the prisoners began a search for the soldier whom they had called a poltroon, speaking his name pitifully, sorry, their hearts filled with regret. They tore down the strings of tents, jerked dead bolo-men over. None had seen him since the firing of the first volley.

They found him lying among the dead. A bolo had fallen on his right temple, but his bayonet was red in the heart of the Filipino commander, a Captain. His rifle was empty. He had left the line behind the trees rather than waste time in reloading, risking the bullets of his comrades, to fight hand to hand with his bayonet to prove himself, to prove that he was not a coward.

They carried him to the fire. He was only unconscious from the blow on his head. Big Malone brought a canteen of water, which he applied, while Captain Elfinch himself began to bind up the wound made by the bolo. And Big Malone stammeringly told all that he knew about Little Malone, despite the presence of the first sergeant and his hopes of a corporalship.

Then Little Malone made a grimace, opened his gray eyes and sat up.

"A little caress on the knot," was his comment, when he had felt of the bandage. "Did I get my man?"

"You got your man," answered the commanding officer, as he applied a strip of adhesive plaster to the young soldier's breast. "By the way, how did you get this slit without getting your shirt cut?"

"I had to do it to impress Sergeant Bailor," said Little Malone fearlessly. "I apologize for the lie, Sergeant. What are you looking so solemn about, you fellows? Are you much obliged? You see I heard Big Malone telling about my prophecy."

"We certainly are much obliged!" said a dozen voices. And most sincere of all, perhaps, was that of Captain Elfinch. "And we, as one man, apologize," finished the Captain.

"Accepted," granted Little Malone. "But —it's not right for an officer to apologize to a private, is it?"

"It may not be according to custom," Captain Elfinch returned, "but it's right in this case. My boy, I'm going to give you something to help me express my appreciation. It's all I've got that's half good enough for you. God bless it—it and you, one the spirit of the other."

He pulled from his blouse a small, silken American flag. Little Malone took it in his blood-stained hands, looked at it through eyes that opened and shut in quick succession for a moment, then bowed his head and sobbed.

"Yes, bless it. My folks all fell under—the other one—but I love this, just the same. They would too, if they were alive!"

Captain Elfinch was a very human person. He closed his mouth tightly, so tightly that it quivered, trying to keep a grip on his feelings. He crept a foot nearer the wounded man to whom Company B owed life and breath and hopes of seeing home again, and took the trembling, bloody hand that held the diminutive flag. And then,

"Son, you had a reason for turning back at San Mateo, a reason you've never told. I want you to tell us why you turned back from the top of the trench at San Mateo."

Little Malone looked up. "I guess I can tell it, now that you know I've got insides in me. Somehow, I don't think *she* will care, under the circumstances. I could have told it before, but I knew nobody would believe me. Then, there was the guying."

He put a hand to the pocket of his shirt and drew out an object, which he placed in the hands of the officer.

"Just as we reached the top of the trench," he said, "that fell from my pocket and went rolling end over end down the bank. I went after it. The orders I obeyed are on the back. I got those orders before I got orders to climb that hill at San Mateo!"

Captain Elfinch held the object to the light of the fire. It was the photograph of a girl back in old Kentucky, and written across the back in a careful, regular, girlish hand was the sentence:

"Don't let anybody see this."

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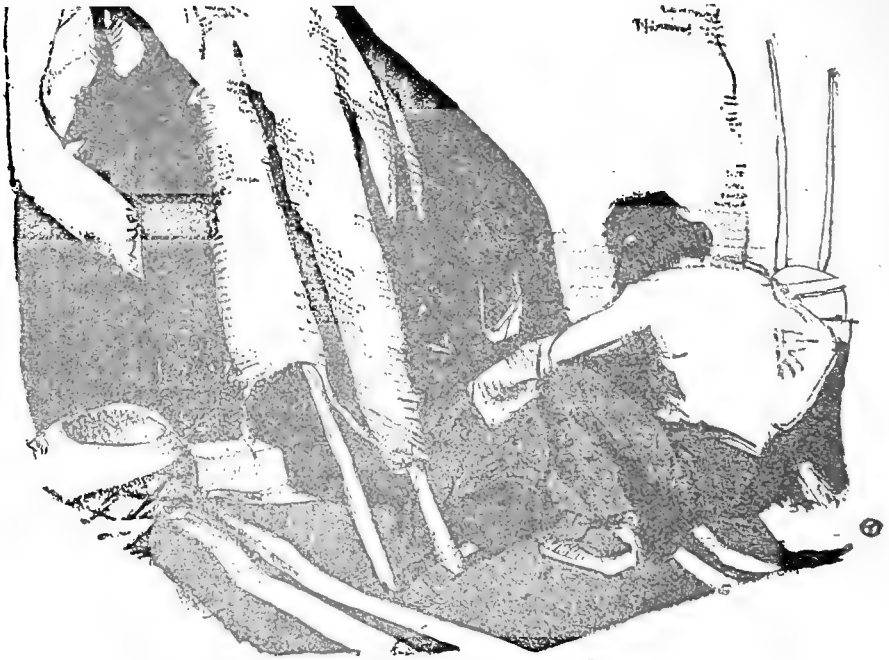

Kut-le of the Desert

by Honoré Willsie

SYNOPSIS: Rhoda Tuttle, an invalid from the East, visiting Mr. and Mrs. Jack Newman on their ranch in New Mexico, has broken her engagement to John De Witt on the grounds of her ill health. Charley Cartwell, or Kut-le, an Indian, but a Yale graduate, and an engineer on the irrigation project, saves Rhoda from a scorpion-bite. He proposes, but is rejected, her liking for him being unequal to her objection to Indian blood. Kut-le therefore adopts Indian measures, and carries her off by force, to win her love and restore her health by shaking her out of partly imaginary invalidism, and shattering some of her artificial ideas by contact with Nature and real life. She is treated with the utmost respect, but forced to stand all the hardships of the hurried flight. She drops her scarf as a clue for the pursuing white men. Provenso, a bad white man, is foiled by Kut-le in an attempt to rescue her. She gets over her first horror and hate, but still hopes for rescue and still is hard set against Kut-le. Newman, De Witt and Billy Porter, an old plainsman, are at last sighted in pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII

TOUCH AND GO

THE John DeWitt who helped break camp after finding Rhoda's scarf was a different man from the half-crazed person of the three days previous. He had begun to hope, somehow; that white scarf with Rhoda's perfume clinging to it was a living thing to him, a living, pulsing promise that Rhoda was helping him to find her. Now, while Jack and Billy were feverishly eager, he was cool and clear-headed, leaving the leadership to Billy still, yet doing more than his share of the work in preparing for the hard night ahead of them. The horses were well watered, their own canteens were filled and saturated, and food so prepared that it could be eaten from the saddle.

"For," said Porter, "when we do hit the little girl's trail, starvation or thirst or high —— ain't going to stop us!"

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It was midafternoon when they started down the mountainside. There was no trail and going was painful, but the men moved with the care of desperation. Once in the canyon, they moved slowly along the wall, and some two miles from where the scarf had been found they discovered a fault where climbing was possible. It was nearing sundown when they reached a wide ledge where the path was easy. Porter led the way back over this to the spot below which fluttered a white paper to mark the spot where the scarf had been found.

The ledge deepened here to make place for a tiny bubbling spring. Giant boulders were scattered across the rocky floor. The three men dismounted. The ledge gave no trace of human occupancy, and yet Porter and Jack nodded at each other.

"Here was his camp, all right. Water, and no one could come within a mile of him without his being seen."

"He's still covering his traces carefully," said Jack.

"Not so very," answered Porter. "He's banking a whole lot on our stupidity, but Miss Tuttle beat him to it with her scarf."

The three men treated the ledge to a microscopic examination, but they found no trace of previous occupation until Billy knelt and put his nose against a black outcropping of stone in the wall. Then he gave a satisfied grunt.

"Come here, Jack, and take a sniff."

Jack knelt obediently and cried excitedly, "It smells of smoke, by Jove, don't it, Billy, old scout!"

"They knew smoke wouldn't show against a black outcrop, but they didn't bank on my nose!" said Billy complacently. "Come ahead, boys."

A short distance from the spring they found a trail which led back up the mountain, and as dusk came on they followed its dizzy turns until darkness forced them to halt and wait until the moon rose. By its light they moved up into a *piñon* forest.

"Let's wait here until daylight," suggested Jack. "It's a good place for a camp."

"No, it's too near the ledge," objected Billy. "Of course we are working on faith mostly. I'm no Sherlock Holmes. We'll keep to the backbone of this range for a while. It's the wildest spot in New Mexico. Kut-le will avoid the railroad over by the next range."

So Billy led his little band steadfastly southward. At dawn they met a Mexican sheep-herder herding his sheep in a grassy canyon. Jack Newman called to him eagerly and the Mexican as eagerly answered. A visitor was worth a month's pay to the lonely fellow. The red of dawn was painting the fleecy backs of his charges as the tired Americans rode into his little camp.

"Seen anything of an Injun running away with a white girl?" asked Billy without preliminaries.

The Mexican's jaw dropped. "*Santa Maria!*" he gasped. "Not I! Who is she?"

"Listen," broke in Jack; "you be on the watch. An educated Indian has stolen a young lady who was visiting my wife. I own the Newman ranch. That Indian Cartwell it was, three days ago."

John DeWitt interrupted.

"If you can catch that Indian, if you can give us a clue to him, you needn't herd sheep any more. Lord, man, speak up! Don't stand there like a chump!"

"But, señors," stammered the poor fellow, to whom this sudden torrent of conversation was as overwhelming as a cloudburst, "but I have not seen——"

Billy Porter spoke again.

"Hold up, boys! We are scaring the poor devil to death. Friend pastor," he said, "we'll have breakfast here with you if you don't object, and tell you our troubles."

The shepherd glowed with hospitality.

"Yonder is good water, and I have *tortillas* and *frijoles*."

Unshaven and dirty, gaunt from lack of sleep, the three men dismounted wearily and gladly turned their coffee and bacon over to the herder, to whom the mere odor of either was worth any amount of service. As they ate, Jack and Billy quizzed the Mexican as to the topography of the surrounding country. The little herder was a canny chap.

"He will not try to cover his trail carefully now," he said, swallowing huge slabs of bacon. "He has a good start. You will have to fool him. He sleeps by day and travels by night, you will see. You are working too hard and your horses will be dead. You should have slept last night. Now you will lose to-day because you must rest your horses."

Porter looked at his two companions. Jack was doing fairly well, but the calm that DeWitt had found with Rhoda's scarf had deserted him. He was eating scarcely any-

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thing, and stared impatiently at the fire, waiting for the start.

"I'm a blame double-action jackass with a peanut for a mind!" exclaimed Porter. "Taking on myself to lead this hunt when I don't *sabe frijoles!* We take a sleep now."

DeWitt jumped to his feet, expostulating, but Jack and Billy laid a hand on either of his shoulders and forced him to lie down on his blanket. There nature claimed her own, and in a short time the poor fellow was in the slumber of exhaustion.

"Poor old chap!" said Jack, as he spread his own blanket. "I can't help thinking all the time, 'What if it were Katherine!' Dear old Rhoda! Why, Billy, we used to play together as kids! She's slapped my face many a time!"

"Probably you deserved it!" answered Billy, in an uncertain voice. "By the Limping Piper! I'm glad I ain't her financier. I'm most crazy, as it is!"

The sheep-herder woke the sleepers at noon. After a bath at the spring and dinner, the trio felt as if reborn. They left the herder with minute directions as to what he was to do in case he heard of Rhoda. Then they rode out of the canyon into the burning desert.

AND now for several days they lost all clues. They beat up and down the ranges like tired hunting-dogs, all their efforts fruitless. Little by little panic and excitement left them. Even DeWitt realized that the hunt was to be a long and serious one, as Porter told of the fearful chases the Apaches had led the whites, time and again. He began to realize that to keep alive in the terrible region through which the hunt was set, he must help the others to conserve their own and his energies. To this end they ate and slept as regularly as possible.

Occasionally they met other parties of searchers, but this was only when they beat to the eastward toward the ranch, for most of the searchers were now convinced that Kut-le had made toward Mexico, and they were patrolling the border. But Billy insisted that Kut-le was making for some aerie that he knew and would ensconce himself there for months, if need be, till the search was given up. Then, and then only, would he make for Mexico. And John DeWitt and Jack had come to agree with Billy.

"He'll keep her up in some haunt of his," said Jack, again and again, "until he has worn her into consenting to marry him. And before that happens, if I know old Rhoda, we'll find them."

"He's mine when we do find him, remember that!" John DeWitt always said through his teeth at this point in the discussion.

It was on the twelfth day of the hunt that the sheep-herder found them. They were cinching up the packs after the noon rest when he rode up on a burro. He was dust-coated, and both he and the burro were panting.

"I've seen her! I've seen the señorita!" he shouted, as he clambered stiffly from the burro. The three Americans stood rigid.

"Where? How? When?" came from three heat-cracked mouths. The Mexican started to answer, but his throat was raw with alkali dust and his voice was scarcely audible. DeWitt impatiently thrust a canteen into the little fellow's hands.

"Hurry, for heaven's sake!" he urged.

The Mexican took a deep draft.

"The night after you left I moved up into the peaks intending to cross the range to lower pastures next day. A big storm came up and I made camp. Then an Indian in a blanket rode up to me and asked me if I was alone. I *sabed* him at once. 'But yes, señor,' I answered, 'except for the sheep.'"

"But Miss Tuttle! The señorita!" shouted DeWitt.

The Mexican glanced at the tired blue eyes, the strained face pityingly. "She was well," he answered. "Be patient, señor. Then there rode up another Indian, two squaws and what looked to be a young boy. The Indian lifted the boy from the saddle so tenderly, señors. And it was your señorita! She did not look strong, yet I think the Indian is taking good care of her. They sat by the fire till the storm was over. The señorita ignored Kut-le as if he had been a dog."

Porter clenched his teeth at this while Jack murmured with a gleam of savage satisfaction in his eyes, "Old Rhoda!" But DeWitt only gnawed his lip, with his blue eyes on the Mexican.

"The Indian said I was to say nothing, but the señorita made him let me tell about you, after I said I had seen you. She—she cried with happiness. They rode away in a little while, but I followed as long as I dared to leave my sheep. They were going north.

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I think they were in the railroad range the night you were with me, then doubled back.

"I left my sheep the next day with the salt-boy who came up. I tramped twenty miles to the *rancho* and got a burro, and left word about the señorita. Then I started on your trail. Every one I met I told. I thought that my news was not worth much except that the señor there would be glad to know that the Indian is tender to his señorita."

DeWitt turned to Porter and Newman.

"Friends, perhaps she is being taken care of," he said. "Perhaps that devil is trying to keep her health, at least. God! If nothing worse has befallen her!"

HE STOPPED and drew his wrist across his forehead. Something like tears shone in Jack's eyes, and Porter coughed. John turned to the Mexican and grasped the little fellow's hand.

"My boy," he said, "you'll never regret this day's work! If you have a señorita you know what you have done for me!"

The Mexican looked up into DeWitt's face seriously:

"I have one. She has a dimple in her chin."

John turned abruptly and stood staring into the desert while tears seared his eyes. Billy hastily unpacked and gave Carlos and his burro the best that the outfit afforded.

"Can the salt-boy stay on with the sheep while you come on with us?" asked John DeWitt. "I'll pay your boss for the whole flock if anything goes wrong." He wanted the keen wit of the herder on the hunt.

The Mexican nodded eagerly. "I'll stay!"

Shortly the four were riding northward across the desert. They were in fairly good shape for a hard ride. Two days before they had stopped at Squaw Spring ranch and re-outfitted. With proper care of the horses, they were fit for three weeks away from supplies. And for two weeks now they scoured the desert, meeting scarcely a human, finding none of the traces that Rhoda was so painfully dropping along her course. The hugeness, the cruelty of the region drove the hopelessness of their mission more and more deeply into DeWitt's brain. It seemed impossible, except by the merest chance, to find trace of another human in a waste so vast. It seemed to him that it was not skill, but the gambler's instinct for luck, that guided Carlos and Billy.

They rode through open desert country one afternoon, the only mountains discernible being a far purple haze along the horizon. For hours the little cavalcade had moved without speech, then to the north Porter discerned a dot moving toward them. Gradually under their eager eyes the dot grew into a man who staggered as he walked. When he observed the horsemen coming toward him he sat down and waited.

"Jim Provenso! By the Limping Piper!" cried Billy. "Thought you was in Silver City."

Jim was beyond useless speech. He caught the canteen which Jack swung to him and drank deeply. Then he said hoarsely:

"I almost got away with Miss Tuttle last week!"

Every man left his saddle as if at a word of command. Jim took another drink.

"If I catch that Injun alone I'll cut his throat!"

"Was Miss Tuttle bad off?" gasped Porter.

"She? Naw, she looked fine. He sassed me, though, as I won't take it from any man!"

"Tell us what happened, for heaven's sake!" cried DeWitt, eying Provenso disgustedly. Jim told his story in detail.

"That Injun Alchise," he ended, "he tied a rag over my eyes, tied my hands up and, say, he lost me for fair! He took all day to it. At night he tied me up to a tree, and I stood there all night before I got my hands loose. I was sure lost now, I can tell you! I struck a cow-man up on the range the next night. He give me some grub and a canteen, and I made out pretty good till yesterday, working south all the time. Then I got crazy with thirst and threw my canteen away. Found a spring last night again, but I'm about all in."

"How did Miss Tuttle seem?" asked John, with curious quietness. It seemed to him the strangest thing of all that first the Mexican, then this coarse, tramp-like fellow, should have talked to Rhoda, while he could only wander wildly through the Hades of the desert without now a trace of her camp to solace him.

"Say, she was looking good! She thanked me and told me to tell you all to hurry."

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They gave to Provenso a burro whose pack was nearly empty, what food and water they could spare, and he left them. They started on dejectedly. Provenso had told them where Kut-le had camped ten days before. They could only find that spot and attempt to pick up the trail from there.

"Just the same," said Billy, "it's just as well he didn't get away with Miss Rhoda. He's a tough pill, that Provenso. She'd better be with the Injun than him!"

"Provenso must be a bad lot," said Jack.

"He is!" replied Billy grimly.

The camp was made that night near a smooth-faced mesa. Before dawn they had eaten breakfast and were mounting, when Carlos gave a low whistle. Every ear was strained. On the exquisite stillness of the dawn sounded a woman's voice which a man's voice answered.

CHAPTER XVIII

A LONG TRAIL

RHODA gave a cry of joy. From the horseman rose a sudden shout.

"Spread! Spread! There they are!"

"Don't shoot!" It was Porter's voice, shrill and high with excitement. "That's her, the boy there! Rhoda! Rhoda! We're coming!"

With a quick responsive cry, Rhoda struck her horse. With the blow, Kut-le leaned from his own horse and seized her bridle, turning her horse with his own away from the mesa and to the left. The other Indians followed, and with hoarse cries of exultation the rescuers took up the pursuit.

Rhoda looked back.

"Shoot!" she screamed. "Shoot!"

Before the second scream had left her lips she was lifted bodily from the saddle to Kut-le's arms where, understanding his device, she struggled like a madwoman. But she only wasted her strength. Without a glance at her, Kut-le turned his pony almost in its tracks and made for the mesa.

"Cut him off! He'll get away from us!" It was DeWitt's voice.

"John! John DeWitt!" Rhoda cried.

But the young Indian had gaged his distance well. He brought his horse to its haunches, and, with Rhoda in his arms, was running into a narrow fissure seemingly too narrow for human to enter, while the pursuers were still a hundred yards away.

"Hold 'em, Alchise!" he said briefly, as he ran.

Alchise, with rifle cocked, stopped by the opening. The fissure widened immediately into a narrow passageway. High, high above them rolled a strip of pink-blue morning sky. Before them was a seemingly interminible crevice, along which the squaws scuttled. As Rhoda watched them they disappeared around a sudden curve. When Kut-le reached this point with his burden, the squaws were climbing like monkeys up the wall, which here gave back roughly, ending the fissure in a rude chimney which it seemed to Rhoda only a bear or an Apache could have climbed. Kut-le set Rhoda on her feet. She looked up into his face mockingly. To her mind she was as good as rescued. But the young Apache seemed in no wise hurried or excited.

"Our old friends seem to want something!" he commented with his boyish grin.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Rhoda, with calm equal to the Apache's.

"I can't carry you up this wall," suggested Kut-le.

"Very well!" returned Rhoda pleasantly. "I am quite willing that you should leave me here."

Kut-le's eyes glittered. "Rhoda, you must climb this wall with me!"

"I won't!" replied Rhoda laconically.

"Then I shall force you to," said the Indian, shifting his rifle and prodding Rhoda ever so gently with the barrel.

Rhoda gave Kut-le a look of scorn that he was not soon to forget, and slowly mounted the first broken ledge. The wall was composed of a series of jutting rocks and of ledges that barely offered hand- or foot-hold. Up and up and up! Kut-le was now beside her, now above her, now lifting, now pulling. Half way to the top, Rhoda stopped, dizzy and afraid. Kneeling on the ledge above with one hand thrust down to lift her, Kut-le looked into her eyes almost pleadingly. That handsome face so close to hers affected Rhoda strangely.

"Don't be afraid," whispered Kut-le. "Nothing can happen to you while I am taking care of you."

Rhoda looked into his eyes proudly.

"I am not afraid," she said, reaching for a fresh handhold, with trembling fingers.

The jutting rocks were sharp. Kut-le from his ledge saw Rhoda look at her hold,

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then turn white. Her nails were torn to the quick and bleeding! She swayed with only an atom of gravity lacking to send her to death below. Instantly Kut-le was back beside her, his sinewy hand between her shoulders supporting and lifting her to the ledge above.

As they neared the top the broken surface became prickly with cactus, and Rhoda winced with misery as the thorns pierced and tore her flesh. But finally, in what actually had been an incredibly short time, they emerged on the plateau, where the two squaws huddled high above the pursuers.

"They think they have you now!" said Kut-le, as Rhoda dropped, panting, to the ground. "We must move out of here before they investigate the mesa top."

HE ALLOWED, however, a few minutes' breathing spell for Rhoda. She sat quietly, though her gray eyes were brilliant with excitement. It seemed to her but a matter of a few hours now when she would be with her own. Yet she could not but notice, with that curious observance of detail which comes at moments of intensest excitement, the colors of the distances that opened before her. The great mesa on which she sat was a mighty peninsula of chalcedony that stretched into the desert. It was patched by rocks of lavender, of yellow, and of green, and belled over by the intensity of the morning blue above.

"Come!" said Kut-le. "There will be little rest for us, to-day."

Rhoda rose, took a few staggering steps, then sat down.

"I can't start yet," she said. "I'm too worn out."

Kut-le's expression was amused, while it was impatient.

"I suppose you may be sleepy, but I think you can walk a little way. Hurry, Rhoda! Hurry!"

Rhoda sat staring calmly into the palpitating blue above.

"I hate to have you carry me," she said after a moment, "but I don't feel at all like walking!"

Her tired face was irresistibly lovely as she looked up at the Apache, but by an effort he remained obdurate. "You must walk as long as you can," he insisted. "We have got to hustle to-day!"

"I really don't feel like hustling!" sighed Rhoda. "I'm tired, Kut-le. Oh so tired!"

"Rhoda!" cried Kut-le impatiently. "Get up and walk after me! Cesca, see that the white squaw keeps moving!" and he handed his rifle to the brown hag, who took it with evident pleasure. Molly ran forward as if to protest, but at a look from Kut-le she dropped back.

Rhoda rose slowly, with her lower lip caught between her teeth. She followed silently after Kut-le, Cesca and the rifle at her shoulder and Molly in the rear. It seemed to the girl that of all the strange scenes through which the past weeks had carried her this was the most unreal. All about her was a world of vivid rock-heaps so intensely colored that she doubted her vision. Away to the south lay the boundless floor of the desert, a purple and gold infinity that rolled into the horizon. Far to the north mountains were faintly blue in the yellow sunlight.

Kut-le headed straight for the mountains. His pace was swift and unrelenting. Almost immediately Rhoda felt the debilitating effects of overheat. The sun, now sailing high, burned through her flannel shirt until her flesh was blistered beneath it. The light on the brilliantly colored rocks made her eyes blink with pain. Before long she was parched with thirst and faint with hunger. This was her first experience in tramping for any distance under the desert sun. But Kut-le kept the pace long after the two squaws were half leading, half carrying the girl.

Rhoda had long since learned the uselessness of protesting. She kept on until the way danced in reeling colors before her eyes. Then without a sound she dropped in the scant shadow of a rock. At the cry from Molly, Kut-le turned and, after one glance at Rhoda's white face and limp figure, he knelt in the sand and lifted the drooping, yellow head.

Molly unslung her canteen and forced a few drops of water between Rhoda's lips. Then she tenderly chafed the small hands and the delicate throat, and Rhoda opened her eyes. Immediately Kut-le lifted her in his arms and the flight was resumed.

At short intervals during the morning Rhoda walked, but for the most part Kut-le packed her as dispassionately as if she had been a lame puppy. He held her across his broad chest as if her fragile weight were nothing. Lying so, Rhoda watched the

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merciless landscape or the brown squaws jogging at Kut-le's heels. Surely, she thought, the ancient mesa never had seen a stranger procession or known of a wilder mission! She looked up into Kut-le's face and wondered idly, as she stared at his bare head, how his eyes could look so steadily into the sun-drenched landscape.

At last, as she lay, the elation of the early morning left her. More and more surely the conviction came to her that the Apache's boast was true—that no white could catch him on his own ground. Dizzy and ill from the heat, she closed her eyes and lay without hope or coherent thought.

CHAPTER XIX

FEVER

AT NOON they stopped for a short time that Rhoda might eat. Their resting-place was in the shadow of a beetling, weather-beaten rock that still bore traces of hieroglyphic carvings. There were broken bits of clay pots among the tufts of cactus. Rhoda stared at them languidly and wondered what the forgotten vessels could have contained, in a region so barren of life or hope.

Kut-le strolled over to a cat's-claw bush at whose base lay a tangle of dead leaves. With a bit of stick he scattered this litter, struck the ground several good blows and returned with a string of fat desert mice. With infinite care Cesca kindled a fire so tiny, so clear, that scarcely a wisp of smoke escaped into the quivering air. Into this she flung the eviscerated mice, and in an instant the tiny things were a delicate brown. The aroma was pleasant, but Rhoda turned whiter still when Molly brought her the fattest of the mice.

"Take it away!" she whispered. "Take it away!"

Molly looked at the girl in stupid surprise. "You must eat, Rhoda girl!" said Kut-le.

Rhoda made no reply, but leaned limply against the ancient rock, her golden hair touching the crude drawings of long ago. She was a very different Rhoda from the eager girl of the early morning. She ignored every effort Kut-le made to tempt her to eat. Her tired gaze wandered to her hands, still blood-grimed, and her cleft chin quivered. Kut-le saw the expressive little look.

"I'm sorry," he said simply.

Rhoda looked up at him, "I don't believe you," she said calmly.

The Indian's jaw stiffened.

"Come, we'll start now."

The afternoon was like the morning, except that the sun was more burning overhead, the way more scorching under foot; except that the course became more broken, the clambering heavier, the drops more racking. All the afternoon Kut-le carried Rhoda. At last the sun sank below the mesa, and the day was ended.

The place of their camping seemed to Rhoda damp and cold. It was close beside a spring that gave out a faint, miasmic odor. The bitter water was grateful, however. Again more mice were seared over before the fire was stamped out hastily. This time Rhoda forced herself to eat. Then she drank deeply of the bitter water and lay down on the cold ground. Despite the fact that she was shivering with the cold, she fell asleep at once. Toward midnight she awoke, and moving close to Molly's broad back for warmth, she looked up into the sky. For the first time the great southern stars seemed near and kindly to her, and before she fell asleep again she wondered why!

At earliest peep of dawn the squaws were astir, waiting for Kut-le, who shortly staggered into camp with a load of meat on his shoulder. Alchise was with him.

"Mule meat!" said Kut-le to Rhoda. "I went to find horses, but there was nothing but an old lame mule. I brought him back this way!"

"Heavens!" ejaculated Rhoda.

The squaws worked busily, cutting the meat into strips which they hung over their shoulders to sun-dry during the day. Alchise cleansed a length of mule's intestine in the spring, to serve as a canteen. Rhoda gave small heed to these preparations. She was too ill and feverish even to be disgusted by them.

She refused to eat, but drank constantly from the spring. When at Kut-le's command she took up the march with the others the young man eyed her anxiously. He slung Molly's canteen from his own to Alchise's shoulder, and felt Rhoda's pulse.

"This water was bad for you," he said, "but it was the only spring within miles. Perhaps you will throw off the effects of it when we get into the heat of the sun."

Rhoda made no reply, but staggered mis-

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erably after Molly. The spring lay in a pocket between mountains and mesa. The mountains seemed cruelly high to Rhoda as she looked at them and thought of toiling across them. With head sunk on her breast and with feverishly twitching hands, she followed for half an hour. Then Kut-le turned.

"I'm going to carry you, Rhoda," he said.

The girl shrank away from him. "You and Molly and all of them think I'm just a parasite," she muttered. "You don't have to do anything for me. Just let me drop anywhere and die!"

Kut-le looked at her strangely. Without comment he picked her up. There was a sternly tender look on his face that never had been there before. He did not carry her dispassionately to-day, but very gently. Something in his manner pierced through Rhoda's half delirium, and she looked up at him with a faint replica of her old lovely smile that Kut-le had not seen since he had stolen her. He trembled at its beauty, and started forward at a tremendous pace.

"I'll get you to good water by noon," he said.

AT NOON they were well up in the mountains, by a clear spring fringed with aspens. Watercress grew below it, and high above it were pines and junipers. It was a spot of surpassing loveliness, but Rhoda, tossing and panting, could not know it. Kut-le laid his burden on the ground and Molly drew off her tattered petticoat to lay beneath the tossing head.

The young Apache stood looking down at the little figure so graceful in its boyish abandonment of gesture, so pitiful in its broken unconsciousness. Molly bathed the burning face and hands in the pure cold water, muttering tender Apache phrases. Kut-le constantly interrupted her to change the girl's position. For an hour or so he waited for the fever to turn. By three o'clock there was no change for the better, and he left Rhoda's side to pace back and forth by the spring in anxious thought.

At last he came to a conclusion, and with stern, set face he issued a few short orders to his companions. The canteens were refilled. Kut-le lifted Rhoda, and the trail was taken to the west. Alchise would have relieved him of his burden willingly, but Kut-le would not listen to it. Molly trotted anxiously by the young Apache's side, constantly moistening the girl's lips with water.

Rhoda was quite delirious now. She murmured and sometimes sobbed, trying to free herself from Kut-le's arms.

"I'm not sick!" she said, looking up into the Indian's face with unseeing eyes. "Don't let him see that I am sick!"

"No, no, dear one!" answered Kut-le.

"Don't let him see I'm sick!" she sobbed. "He hurts me so!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Kut-le huskily. "Molly, give her a little more water!"

"Molly," panted Rhoda, "you tell him how hard I worked—how I earned my way a little! And don't let him do anything for me!"

CHAPTER XX

THE CHANT OF THE MEDICINE-MAN

THE little group trudging the long, difficult trail along the mountain was a rich study in degrees: Rhoda, the fragile Caucasian, a product of centuries of civilization; and Kut-le, the Indian, with the keenness, the ferocious courage, the cunning of the Indian, leavened inextricably with the thousand softening influences of a score of years' contact with civilization; then Cesca, the lean and stoical product of an ancient and terrible savagery, and Alchise, her mate. Finally, Molly—squat, dirty Molly, the stupid, squalid aborigine, as distinct from Cesca's type as is the brown snail from the stinging wasp.

Alchise, striding after his chief, was smitten with a sudden idea. After ruminating on it for some time, he communicated it to his squaw. Cesca shook her head with a grunt of disapproval. Alchise insisted, and the squaw looked at Kut-le cunningly.

"*Quién sabe?*" she said at last.

At this Alchise hurried forward and touched Kut-le on the shoulder. "Take 'em squaw to Reservation. Medicine dance. Squaw heap sick. *Sabe?*"

"Reservation's too far away," replied Kut-le, shifting Rhoda's head to lie more easily on his arm. "I'm making for Chira."

Alchise shook his head vigorously. "Too many mens! We go Reservation. Alchise help carry sick squaw."

"Nope! You're way off, Alchise. I'm going where I can get some white man's medicine the quickest. I'm not so afraid

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of getting caught as I am of her getting a bad run of fever. I have friends at Chira."

Alchise fell back, muttering disappointment. White man's medicine was no good. He cared little about Rhoda, but he adored Kut-le. It was necessary, therefore, that the white squaw be saved, since his chief evidently was quite mad about her. All the rest of the day Alchise was very thoughtful. Late at night the next halt was made. High up in the mountain on a sheltered ledge Kut-le laid down his burden.

"Keep her quiet till I get back," he said, and disappeared.

Rhoda was in a stupor, and lay quietly unconscious with the stars blinking down on her, a limp, dark heap against the mountain wall. The three Indians munched mule-meat, then Molly curled herself on the ground and in three minutes was snoring. Alchise stood erect and still on the ledge for perhaps ten minutes after Kut-le's departure. Then he touched Cesca on the shoulder, lifted Rhoda in his arms, and, followed by Cesca, left the sleeping Molly alone on the ledge.

Swiftly, silently, Alchise strode up the mountainside, Rhoda making neither sound nor motion. For hours, with wonderful endurance, the two Indians held the pace. He moved up the mountain to the summit, which he crossed, then dropped rapidly downward. Just at dawn he stopped at a gray *campos* under some pines, and called. A voice from the hut answered him. The canvas flap was put back and an old Indian buck appeared, followed by several squaws and young bucks, yawning and staring.

Alchise laid Rhoda on the ground while he spoke rapidly to the old Indian. The old man protested at first, but on the repeated use of Kut-le's name he finally nodded, and Alchise carried Rhoda into the *campos*. A squaw kindled a fire, which, blazing up brightly, showed a huge, dark room, canvas-roofed and dirt-floored, quite bare except for the soiled blankets on the floor.

Rhoda was laid in the center of the hut. The old buck knelt beside her. He was very old indeed. His time-ravaged features were lean and ascetic. His clay-matted hair was streaked with white, his black eyes were deep sunk, and his temples were hollow. But there was a fine sort of dignity about the old medicine-man, despite his squalor. He gazed on Rhoda for some time in silence.

Alchise and Cesca sat on the floor, and little by little they were joined by a dozen other Indians, who formed a circle about the girl. The firelight flickered on the dark, intent faces, and on Rhoda's delicate beauty as she lay passing rapidly from stupor to delirium.

SUDDENLY the old man raised his lean hand, shaking a gourd filled with pebbles, and began softly to chant. Instantly the other Indians joined him and the *campos* was filled with the beating rhythm of a weird song. Rhoda tossed her arms and began to cough a little from the smoke.

The chant quickened. It was but the mechanical repetition of two notes, falling always from high to low. Yet it had an indescribable effect of melancholy, this aboriginal song. It was as hopeless and melancholy as other of nature's chants—the wail of the wind, the sob of the rain, the beat of waves. Rhoda sat erect, her eyes wild and wide. The old buck, without ceasing his song, attempted to thrust her back with one lean, brown claw, but Rhoda struck him feebly.

"Go away!" she cried. "Be quiet! You hurt my head! Don't make that dreadful noise!"

The chant quickened. The medicine-man now rocked back and forth on his knees, accenting the throb of the song by beating his bare feet on the earth. He seemed by some strange suppleness to flatten his instep paddle-wise and to bring the entire leg from toe to knee at one blow against the ground. Never did his glowing old eyes leave Rhoda's face.

The girl, thrown into misery and excitement by the insistence of the chant, began to wring her hands. The words said nothing to her, but the rhythmic repetition of the notes told her a story as old as life itself: that life passes swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and without hope; that our days are as grass, and as the clouds that are consumed and are no more; that the soul sinks to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death. Rhoda struggled, with horror in her eyes, to rise, but the old man with a hand on her shoulder forced her back on the blanket.

"Oh, what is it?" wailed Rhoda, clutching at the mass of yellow-brown hair about her face. "Where am I? What are you doing? Have I died? Where is Kut-le? Kut-le!" she screamed. "Kut-le!"

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The medicine-man held her to the blanket, and for a time she sat quiescent. Then, as the Indian lifted his hand from her shoulder, the bewilderment of her gray eyes changed to the wildness of delirium. She looked toward the doorway where the dawn light made but little headway against the dark interior.

With one blue-veined hand on her panting breast she slowly, stealthily gathered herself together and, with unbelievable swiftness, sprang for the square of dawn light. She leaped almost into the arms of a young buck who sat near the door. He bore her back to her place while the chant continued without interruption.

Exhausted, Rhoda lay listening to the song. Gradually it began to exert its hypnotic influence over her. Its sense of melancholy enveloped her, drug-like. She lay prone, the tears coursing down her cheeks, her twitching hands turned upward beside her. Slowly she floated outward upon a dark sea whose waves beat a ceaseless requiem on her ears. It seemed to her that she was enduring all the sorrows of the ages; that she was being tortured by the death agonies of all humanity; that all the uselessness, all the meaninglessness, all the utter weariness of the death-ridden world pressed upon her, suffocating her, forcing her to stillness, slowing the beating of her heart, the intake of her breath. Slowly her white lids closed, yet with one last conscious cry for life:

"Kut-le!" she wailed. "Kut-le!"

A quick shadow filled the doorway.

"Here, Rhoda! Here!" Kut-le bounded into the room, upsetting the medicine-man, and lifted Rhoda in his arms. She clung to him wildly.

"Take me away, Kut-le! Take me away!"

He soothed her with great tenderness.

"Dear one!" he murmured. "Dear one!" and she closed her eyes quietly.

During this time the Indians sat silent and watchful. Kut-le turned to Alchise.

"You cursed fool!" he said.

"She get well now," replied Alchise anxiously. "Alchise save her for you. Molly tell you where come?"

For a moment Kut-le stared at Alchise, then, as if realizing the futility of speech, "Come!" he said, and ignoring the other Indians, he strode from the *campos*.

Alchise and Cesca followed him, and outside the anxious Molly seized Rhoda's limp hand with a little cry of joy. Kut-le led the way to a quiet spot among the pines. Here he laid Rhoda on a sheepskin and covered her with a tattered blanket, the spoils of his previous night's trip.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TURN IN THE TRAIL

ABOUT the middle of the morning Rhoda opened her eyes. As she stirred, Kut-le came to her.

"I've had such horrible dreams, Kut-le. You won't go and leave me to the Indians again?"

This appeal from Rhoda in her weakness almost overcame Kut-le, but he only smoothed her tangled hair and answered:

"No, dear one!"

"Where are we now?" she asked feebly.

Kut-le smiled. "In the Rockies."

"I think I am very sick," continued Rhoda. "Do you think we can stay quiet in one place to-day?"

Kut-le shook his head.

"I am going to get you to some quinine as quick as I can. There is some about twenty-four hours from here.

Rhoda's eyes widened.

"Shall I be with white people?"

"Don't bother. You'll have good care."

The light faded from Rhoda's eyes.

"It's hard for me, isn't it?" she said, as if appealing to the college-man of the ranch.

"Rhoda! Rhoda!" whispered Kut-le. "Your suffering kills me. But I must have you, I must!"

Rhoda moved her head impatiently, as if the Indian's tense, handsome face annoyed her. She refused food, but drank deeply of the tepid water, and shortly they were again on the trail.

For several hours Rhoda lay in Kut-le's arms, weak and ill, but with lucid mind. They were making their way up a long canyon. It was very narrow. Rhoda could see the individual leaves of the aspens on the opposite wall as they moved close in the shadow of the other. The floor, watered by a clear brook, was level and green. On either side the walls were murmurous with delicately quivering aspens and sighing pines.

Suddenly Cesca gave a grunt of warning. Far down the valley a sheep-herder was approaching with his flocks. Kut-le turned

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to the right, and Alchise sprang to his aid. In the shelter of the trees Kut-le twisted a handkerchief across Rhoda's mouth and in reply to her outraged eyes, he said:

"I don't mind single visitors as a rule, but I haven't time to fuss with one now."

Together the two men carried Rhoda up the canyon-side. They lifted her from trunk to trunk, now a root-hold, now a jutting bit of rock, till far up the sheer wall Rhoda lay at last on a little ledge heaped with pine needles. By the time the Indians were settled upon the rock, Rhoda was delirious again. The fever had returned two-fold, and Molly's entire efforts were toward keeping the tossing form upon the ledge.

Slowly, very slowly, the herder, a sturdy, ragged Mexican, moved up the canyon, pausing now and again to scratch his head. He was whistling "La Paloma." The Indians' black eyes did not leave him and after his flute-like notes had melted into the distance they still crouched in cramped stillness on the ledge.

But shortly Kut-le freed Rhoda's mouth, gave Alchise a swift look, and with infinite care the descent was begun. Kut-le did not like traveling in the daylight, for many reasons. Carefully, swiftly, they moved up the canyon, always hugging the wall. Late in the afternoon they emerged on an open mesa. All the wretched day Rhoda had traveled in a fearsome world of her own, peopled with uncanny figures, alight with a glare that seared her eyes, held in a vise that gripped her until she screamed with restless pain. The song that the shepherd had whistled tortured her tired brain:

"The day that I left my home for the rolling sea,
I said, 'Mother dear, oh pray to thy God for me!'
But ere we set sail I went a fond leave to take——"

Over and over she sang the three lines, ending each time with a frightened stare up into Kut-le's face. "Whom did I say good-by to—whom? But they don't care!" Then again the tired voice:

"The day that I left my home for the rolling sea——"

Night came, and the weary, weary crossing of a craggy, heavily wooded mountain. Kut-le did not relinquish his burden. He seemed not to tire of the weight of the slender body that lay now in helpless stupor. If the squaws or Alchise felt fatigue or impatience as Kut-le held them to a pace on the tortuous trail that would early have exhausted a Caucasian athlete, they gave no sign.

All the endless night Kut-le led the way under the midnight blackness of the *piñon* or the violet light of the stars until the lifting light of the dawn found them across the ranges and standing at the edge of a little river.

IN THE dim light there lifted a terraced adobe building, with ladders faintly outlined on the terraces. There was no sound save the barking of a dog and the ripple of the river. With a muttered admonition, Kut-le left Rhoda to the others and climbed one of the ladders. He returned with a blanketed figure that gazed on Rhoda non-committally. At a sign, Kut-le lifted Rhoda, and the little group moved noiselessly toward the dwelling, clambered up a ladder and disappeared.

Rhoda opened her eyes with a sense of phsyical comfort that confused her. She was lying on the floor of a long, gray-walled room. In one corner was a tiny adobe fireplace, from which a tinier fire threw a jet of flame color on the Navajo blanket that lay before the hearth.

Along the walls were benches with splendid Navajos rolled cushion-wise upon them. Above the benches hung several rifles with cougar-skin quivers beneath them. A couple of cheap framed mirrors were hung with silver necklaces of beautiful workmanship. In a corner a table was set forth with heavy but shining china dishes.

Rhoda stared with increasing wonder. She was very weak and spent, but her head was clear. She lifted her arms and looked at them. She was wearing a loose-fitting gray garment of a strange weave. She fingered it, more and more puzzled.

"You wake now?" asked a soft voice.

Coming softly down the room was an Indian woman of comely face and strange garb. Over a soft shirt, of cut and weave such as Rhoda wore, she wore a dark overdress caught at one shoulder and reaching only to the knees. A many-colored girdle confined the dress at the waist. Her legs and feet were covered with high, loose moccasins. Her black hair hung free on her shoulders.

"You been much sick," the woman went on, "much sick," stooping to straighten Rhoda's blanket.

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"Where am I?" asked Rhoda.

"At Chira. You eat breakfast?"

Rhoda caught the woman's hand.

"Who are you?" she asked. "You have been very good to me!"

"Me Marie," replied the woman.

"Where are Kut-le and the others?"

"Kut-le here. Others in mountain. You much sick, three days."

Rhoda sighed. Would this kaleidoscope of misery never end! "I am very tired of it all," she said. "I think it would have been kinder if you had let me die. Will you help me to get back to my white friends?"

Marie shook her head.

"Kut-le friend. We take care Kut-le's squaw."

Rhoda turned wearily on her side. "Go away and let me sleep," she said.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CROSSING TRAILS

AS KUT-LE, with Rhoda in his arms, disappeared into the mesa fissure, John DeWitt threw himself from his horse and was at the opening before the others had more than brought their horses to their haunches.

He was met by Alchise's rifle, with Alchise entirely hidden from view. For a moment the five men stood panting and speechless. The encounter had been so sudden, so swift, that they could not believe their senses. Then Billy Porter uttered an oath that reverberated from the rocky wall.

"They will get to the top!" he cried. "Jack, you and DeWitt get up there. Carlos and I will hold this!"

The two men mounted immediately and galloped along the mesa wall, looking for an ascent. Neither of them spoke, but both of them were breathing hard, and through his blistered skin DeWitt's cheeks glowed feverishly. For a mile up and down from the fissure the wall was a blank, except for a single wide split which did not come within fifty feet from the ground. After over half an hour of frantic search DeWitt found, nearly three miles from the fissure, a rough spot where the wall gave back in a few narrow crumbling ledges.

"We'll have to leave the horses," he said, "and try that."

Jack nodded tensely. They dismounted, pulled the reins over the horses' heads and started up the wall, John leading, carefully. One bitter lesson the desert was teaching him: haste in the hot country spells ruin! So, though Rhoda's voice still rang in his ears, though the sight of the slender boyish figure struggling in Kut-le's arms still ravished his eyes, he worked carefully.

The ascent was all but impossible. The few jutting ledges were so narrow that foothold was precarious, so far apart that only the slight backward slant of the wall made it possible for them to flatten their bodies against the crumbling brown rock and thus keep from falling. They toiled desperately, silently. After an hour of utmost effort they reached the top, and with an exclamation of exultation started in the direction of the fissure. But their exultation was short-lived. The great split, that stopped fifty feet from the desert floor, cut them off from the main mesa. They ran hastily along its edge, but at no point was it to be crossed. Shortly DeWitt left Jack to follow it back. He made his way back to the mesa front, where he made a perilous descent and returned with the horses to Porter.

That gentleman forced John to eat some breakfast while Carlos rode hastily to scour the mesa-front to the west. Porter and the Mexican had captured two of the horses and the burro that the Indians had left. The other horses had run out into the desert back to the last spring at which they had camped, Porter said.

To DeWitt's great disappointment, the horses carried only blankets, and the burro was loaded with bacon and flour. There were none of Rhoda's personal belongings. The animals were in good condition, however, and the men annexed them to their outfit gladly.

John was torn betwixt hope and bitter disappointment.

"Do you think they could climb out the fissure?" he asked half a dozen times. Then, without waiting for an answer, "Did you see her face, Billy? I had just a glimpse! Didn't she look well? Just that one glance has put new life in me! I know we will get her. Even this cursed desert isn't wide enough to keep me from her! God help that Indian, when I get him!"

Porter kept his eyes on Alchise's rifle, which had never wavered in the past three hours. "I've a notion to shoot the barrel off that thing just for luck!" he growled. "John, sit down! You will need all the

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strength you've got and then some before you catch that Injun!"

"What are you going to do?" asked John, seating himself in the sand some few feet from the fissure.

"The big probability is," said Billy, "that they are still in the crack. It would be just about impossible for a girl to climb out of one of 'em. If they have got out, though, it's just a matter of finding their trail again. We'll have 'em! It's just this chance crack that saved 'em. If you're rested, ride along the west wall and try for the top again."

FOR the next five hours Porter guarded the mesa-front alone. It was nearing six o'clock when Jack returned exhausted and disappointed. He had followed the great split back until the mesa-top became so cut and striated with mighty fissures that progress was impossible.

"Isn't it the devil's own luck," he growled to Porter as he ate, "that we should have let him get into that one crack! What next? Unless they are still in there, we've lost them and are just losing time squatting here."

As he spoke, there was a sound of voices in the fissure. The two men cocked their rifles as John and Carlos emerged from the opening. John was scowling and breathless.

"Lost 'em, as usual, by our infernal stupidity!" he panted, while Carlos threw aside his empty canteen and lifted Porter's to his lips. "I rode round to the south of the mesa. There are a couple of possible ascents there. I found Carlos making one. We followed a dozen fissures before we located this one. We got into it about a mile back from here. Here's a basket we found at the bottom in a burlap bag."

He tossed one of Cesca's pitch baskets at Billy, then threw himself in the sand. "They were down off the mesa, I bet," he went on, "before we fools found the way up, and it was easy for the chap they left guarding the entrance to avoid us. The mesa is covered with big rocks."

"He got away within the last half-hour then," said Billy, "for I didn't stir from this spot until the burro started to eat the grub-pack, and I naturally had to wrestle with him. And no human being could 'a' got out the front even then."

"God! What a country!" groaned DeWitt. "The Indians outwit us at every step."

"Well," answered Jack dejectedly, "tell us what we could have done differently."

"I'm not blaming any one," replied John tersely.

Billy Porter rose briskly:

"You boys quit your kicking. The scent is still warm. You fellows get a couple of hours' sleep while I take the horses back to Coyote Hole for water. By daylight we got to be on the south side of the mesa to pick up the trail."

Billy's businesslike manner heartened Jack and John DeWitt. They turned in beside Carlos, who was already sleeping.

DAWN found them examining the ascents on the south side of the mesa, but they found no traces, and as the sun came well up they followed the only possible way toward the mountains.

At noon they found a low spring in a pocket between mesa and mountain. Kutle was growing either defiant or careless, for he had left a heap of ashes and a pile of half-eaten desert mice. Very much cheered, they allowed the horses a fair rest. They found no further traces of camp or trail that day, and made camp that night in the open desert.

At dawn they were crossing a heavily wooded mountain. The sun had not yet risen when they heard a sound of singing.

"What's that?" asked DeWitt sharply, as the four pulled up their horses.

"A medicine cry," answered Jack. "We must be near some medicine-man's *campos*."

"Come on," cried DeWitt, "we'll quiz them."

"Hold up, you chump!" exclaimed Billy. "If you rush in on a cry that way you are apt not to come back again. You've got to go at 'em careful. Let me do the talking."

They rode toward the sound of the chant and shortly a dingy *campos* came into view. An Indian buck made his way from the doorway toward them.

"Who is sick, friend," asked Billy.

"Old buck," said the Indian.

"Apache?" said Billy. The Indian nodded.

"You *sabe* Apache named Kut-le?"

The buck shook his head, but Billy went on patiently. "Yes, you *sabe* him. He old Ke-say's son. Apache chief's son. He run off with white squaw. We want squaw, we no hurt him. Squaw sick, no good for In-

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jun. You tell, have money." Billy displayed a silver dollar.

The Indian brightened. "Long time 'go, some Injun say he *sabe* Kut-le. Some Injun say he all same white man. Some Injun say he heap smart." He looked at Billy inquiringly, and Billy nodded approval. DeWitt swallowed nervously. "Come two, three days 'go," the buck went on, his eyes on the silver dollar. "Big Injun carry white squaw go by here very fast. He go that way all heap fast." The buck pointed south.

"Did he speak to you? What did he say?" cried DeWitt.

But the Indian lapsed into silence and refused to speak more. But Porter felt well rewarded for his efforts, and tossed the dollar to the Indian.

"Gee!" said Billy, as they started elated down the mountain. "I wish we could overtake him before he outfits again. That poverty-stricken medicine man couldn't have had any horses here for him to use. I'll bet he makes for the nearest ranch, where he could steal a good bunch. That would be at Kelly's, sixty miles south of here. We'll hike for Kelly's!"

This idea did not meet with enthusiastic approval from the other three, but as no one had a better suggestion to make, the trail to Kelly's was taken. It seemed to John DeWitt that Billy relied little on science and much on intuition in trailing the Indians. At first, considering Porter's early boasts about his skill, DeWitt was much disappointed by the old-timer's haphazard methods. But after a few weeks' testing of the terrible hardships of the desert, after a few demonstrations of the Apache's cleverness, John had concluded that intuition was the most reliable weapon that the whites could hope to discover with which to offset the Indian's appalling skill and knowledge.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CLUE AT CHIRA

IT WAS late the next night when the exhausted quartet with its string of horses drew up at Kelly's dusty corral. Dick Kelly, a stocky Irishman, greeted the strangers pleasantly. When, however, he learned their names he rose to the occasion as only an Irishman can.

"You gentlemen are at the end of your rope, wid the end frayed at that!" he said. "Now come in for a few hours' rest, and the Chinaman will cook you the best meal he knows how."

"Lord, no!" cried Billy. "We're so close on the track now that we can hang on to the end. If you've had no trace here, we'll just double back and start from the mountains again."

By this time a dozen cowboys and ranch hands were gathered about the newcomers. Every one knew about Rhoda's disappearance. Every one knew about every man in the little search party. In the flicker of the lanterns the men looked pityingly at DeWitt's haggard face.

"Say," said a tall, lank cow-man, "if you'll go in and sleep till daylight, usn'll scour this part of the desert with a fine-tooth comb. So you all won't lose a minute by taking a little rest. And if we find the Injun we'll string him up and save you the trouble!"

DeWitt spoke for the first time. "If you find the Indian," he said succinctly, "he's mine!"

There was a moment's silence in the crowd. These men were familiar with elemental passion. DeWitt's feeling was perfectly correct in their eyes. The pause came as each pictured himself in DeWitt's place, with the image of the delicate Eastern girl, suffering who knew what torments, constantly before him.

"If Mr. Kelly can arrange for that," said Jack, "I guess it will about save our lives. I'd like a chance to write a letter to my wife."

"You ought to go back to the ditch, Jack," said DeWitt. "Porter and I will manage somehow."

Jack gave DeWitt a strange look. "Rhoda's a lifelong friend of mine. She was stolen from my home by my friend that I told her she could trust. Katherine and the foreman can run the ranch."

By the time that the four had washed themselves, Kelly had his men dotted over the surrounding desert. For the first time in weeks the searchers sat down to a table. DeWitt, Porter and Newman were an astonishing contrast to the three who had dined at the Newman ranch the night of Cartwell's introduction to Porter. Their khaki clothes had gradually been replaced by nondescript garments picked up at various ranches. DeWitt and Porter boasted of

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corduroy trousers, while Jack wore overalls. On the other hand, Jack wore a good blue-flannel shirt, while the other two displayed only faded gingham garments that might have answered to almost any name. All of them were a deep mahogany color, with chapped, split lips and bleached hair, while DeWitt's eyes were badly inflamed from sun-glare and sand-storm.

They ate silently. Dick Kelly, sitting at the head of the table, plied them with food and asked few questions. DeWitt's shaking hands told him that questions were torture to the poor fellow. After the meal Kelly led them to bed at once, and they slept without stirring until four o'clock in the morning, when the Chinaman called them. Breakfast was steaming on the table.

"Now," said Kelly, as his guests ate, "the boys didn't get a smell for ye, but we've a suggestion. Have you been through the Pueblo country yet?"

"No," said Porter.

"Well," the host went on, "Chira is the only place round here except my ranch where he could get a new outfit. He's part Pueblo, you know, too. I'd start for there if I was you."

Carlos entered to hear this suggestion. "I've got a friend at Chira," he said, "who might help us. He is a half-breed."

The tired men took eagerly to this forlorn hope. With all the population of the ranch, including the cook, gathered to wish them Godspeed, the four started off before the sun had more than tinted the east. Kelly had offered them anything on the ranch from himself, his cook, his cowboys, to the choice of his horses, and his guests left as much heartened by his cheerfulness and good will as they were by the actual physical comforts he had given them.

THE trail to Chira was long and hard. They reached the little town at dusk, and Carlos set out at once in search of his friend, Philip. He found him easily. He was half Mexican, half Pueblo. He and Carlos chatted briskly in hybrid Spanish while the Americans watched the horses wade in the little river. Visitors were so common in Chira that the newcomers attracted little or no attention. Carlos finally turned from his friend.

"Philip does not know anything about it. He says for us to come to his house while he finds out anything. His wife is a good cook."

The thought of a hot meal was pleasant to the Americans. They followed gladly to Philip's adobe rooms. Here the half-breed left them to his wife and disappeared. He was gone perhaps an hour when he returned with a bit of cloth in his hand, which he handed to Carlos with a few rapid sentences. Carlos gave the scrap of cloth to DeWitt who looked at it eagerly, then gave a cry of joy. It was Rhoda's handkerchief.

"He found a little girl washing her doll with it at the river," said Carlos. "She said she found it blowing along the street this morning."

"Come on!" cried Jack, making for the door.

"Come on where?" said Billy. "If they are in the village you don't want to get away very far. And if they ain't, which way are you going?"

"Ask Philip where to go, Carlos," said DeWitt.

He held the little moist handkerchief in his hand tightly while his heart beat heavily. Once more hope was soaring high. Philip thought deeply, then he and Carlos talked rapidly together.

"Philip says," reported Carlos, "that you must go out and watch along the river front so that if they have not gone you can catch them if they try. He and I will go visit every family, as if I wanted to buy an outfit."

Darkness had settled on the little town when the three Americans took up their vigil opposite the open face of the pueblo along the river. All that night they stood on guard, but not a human being crossed their line of patrol.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN INTERLUDE

LATE in the afternoon Rhoda awoke. Kut-le stood beside her. His expression was half eager, half tender.

"How do you feel now?" he asked.

"Quite well," answered Rhoda. "Will you call Marie? I want to dress."

"You must rest in bed to-day," replied the Indian. "To-morrow will be soon enough for you to get up."

Rhoda looked at the young man with irritation. "Can't you learn that I am not a squaw? That it maddens me to be ordered about? That every time you do you

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alienate me more—if that is possible?"

"You do foolish stunts," said Kut-le calmly, "and I have to put you right."

Rhoda moaned, "Oh, how long, how long must I endure this! How could they be so stupid as to let you slip through their fingers so!"

Kut-le's mouth became a narrow seam. "As soon as I get you into the Sierra Madre, I shall marry you. You are practically a well woman now. But I am not going to hurry over much. You are going to love me first, and you are going to love this life first. Then we will go to Paris until the storm has passed."

Rhoda did not seem to hear him. She tossed her arms restlessly.

"Please send Marie to me," she said finally; "I am very hungry."

Kut-le left the room at once. In a short time he returned with Marie, who bore a steaming bowl which he himself flanked with a dish of luscious melon. The woman propped Rhoda adroitly to a sitting position, and Kut-le gravely balanced the bowl against the girl's knees. The stew which the bowl contained was delicious, and Rhoda ate it to the last drop. She ate in silence, while Kut-le watched her with unspeakable longing in his eyes. The room was almost dark when the simple meal was finished. Marie brightened the fire and smoothed Rhoda's blankets.

"Kut-le go now," said the Pueblo woman. "You rest. In morning Marie bring white squaw some clothes."

Rhoda was glad to pillow her head on her arm, but it was long before she slept. She tried to piece together her faint and distorted recollection of the occurrences since the morning when the mesa had risen through the dawn. But her only clear picture was of John DeWitt's wild face as she disappeared into the fissure. She recalled its look of agony, and sobbed a little to herself as she realized what torture he and the Newmans must have endured since her disappearance. And yet she was very hopeful. If her friends could come as close to her as they did before the mesa, they must be learning Kut-le's methods. Surely the next time luck would not play so well for the Indian.

Rhoda woke in the morning to the sound of song. Marie knelt on the ground before a sloping slab of stone and patiently kneaded corn with a smaller stone. Her song, a quaint repetition of short mellow syllables, pleased Rhoda's sensitive ear and she lay listening. When Marie saw Rhoda's wide eyes she came to the girl's side.

"You feel good now?" she queried.

"Yes, much better. I want to get up."

The Indian woman nodded. "Marie clean white squaw's clothes. White squaw wear Marie's. Now Marie help you wash."

Rhoda smiled. "You are not an Apache, if you want me to bathe!"

Marie answered indignantly, "Marie is a Pueblo squaw!"

The clothes that Marie brought, Rhoda thought very attractive. There was a soft wool underdress of creamiest tint. Over this Marie pulled, fastening it at one shoulder, a gay, many-colored overdress which, like the one she herself wore, reached to the knees. Rhoda pulled on her own high-laced boots which had been neatly mended. Then the two turned their attention to the neglected braid of hair.

WHEN it was loosened and hung in tangled masses nearly to Rhoda's knees, Marie's delight in its loveliness knew no expression. She fetched a queer, battered old comb, which she washed, and then proceeded with true feminine rapture to comb the wonderful waving locks. In the midst of this Kut-le entered. He gazed on Rhoda's new disguise with delight. Indeed, her delicate face above the many-hued garment was like a harebell growing in a gaudy nasturtium bed.

"We can only let you on the roof," said Kut-le, who was carrying Rhoda's sombrero.

Rhoda made no reply, but, when Marie had plaited her hair in a rippling braid, followed Kut-le up the short ladder. Her sense of cleanliness after the weeks of disorder was delightful. As she stepped on the flat-topped roof and the sweet clear air filled her lungs she felt as if reborn. With Navajo blankets Kut-le had contrived an awning that not only made a bit of shade, but precluded view from below. The rich tints of the blankets were startlingly picturesque against the yellow gray of the adobe. Rhoda dropped luxuriantly to the heap of blankets, and turned her face toward the mountain, many-colored and bare toward the base, deep-cloaked with *piñon*, oak and juniper on the uplands. From its base flowed the little river, gurgling over its shal-

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low bed of stone and rich with green along its flat banks. Close beside the river was the Pueblo village, the many-terraced building, on one of the roofs of which Rhoda sat.

Kut-le, stretched on the roof near-by, smoked cigarette after cigarette as he watched the girl's quiet face, but he did not speak. For three or four hours the two sat thus in silence. Just as the sun sank behind the mountain a bell clanged, and then fell to tolling softly. Then Kut-le broke his silence.

"That's the bell of the old mission. Some one has been buried, I guess. We can look. There are no tourists now."

There was a sound of wailing—a deep, mournful sound that caught Rhoda's heart to her throat and blanched her face. It was the sound of the grief of primitive man, the cry of the forlorn and broken-hearted, uncloaked by convention. It touched a primitive chord of response in Rhoda that set her to trembling. Surely, when the world was young, she too had wept so. Surely she, too, had voiced a poignant, unbearable loss in just such a wild outpouring of grief!

They moved to the edge of the terrace and looked down into the street. Down the rocky way a line of Indians was bearing hand-mills and jars and armloads of ornaments.

"They will take those to the 'killing place' and break them, that the dead owner may have them afterward," explained Kut-le softly. "It always makes me think of a verse in the Bible. I can't recall the words exactly, though."

Rhoda glanced up into the dark face with a look of appreciation. "'And the grinders shall cease because they are few,'" she said, "'and those that look out of the windows be darkened. And the doors shall be shut in the street when the sound of the grinding is low, because man goeth to his long home and mourners go about the street.'"

"And there is something else," murmured Kut-le, "about 'the silver cord.'"

"'Or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit to God who gave it.'"

They stood in silence again. The wailing died into the distance. The sun touched to molten gold the heavy shadows of the mountain *arroyos*. Rhoda was deeply moved by the scene below her. She felt as if she had been thrust back through the ages to look upon the sorrow of some little Judean town. The little rocky street, the vivid robes, the weird, dying wail, the broken ornaments and utensils that some folded, tired hands would use no more, and above all, the simple unquestioning faith roused in her a sudden longing for a life that she never had known. For a long time she stood in thought. As darkness fell she roused herself.

"Let me go back to my room," she said.

As they turned, neither noticed that Rhoda's little handkerchief, which she had carried through all her experiences, fluttered from her sleeve to the street.

CHAPTER XXV

ALMOST

AGAIN it was long before Rhoda slept. Through her window there floated the sound of song, the evening singing of Indian lads in the village street. There was a vibrant quality in their voices that Rhoda could liken only to the music of stringed instruments. There was neither the mellow smoothness of the negro voice, nor the flute-like sweetness of the white, yet the voices compassed all the mystical appealing quality of violin notes.

The music woke in Rhoda a longing for she knew not what. It seemed to her as if she were peering past a misty veil into the childhood of the world, to whose simple beauty and delights civilization had made her alien. The vibrating voices chanted slower and slower. Rhoda stirred uneasily. To be free again as these voices were free! Not to long for the civilization she had left, but for open skies and trails! To be free again!

As the voices melted into silence a guitar was touched softly under Rhoda's window and Kut-le's voice rose in "La Golondrina:"

"Whither so swiftly flies the timid swallow?
What distant bourne seeks her untiring wing?
To reach her nest what needle does she follow?
When darkness wraps the poor wee storm-tossed thing?"

Rhoda stirred restlessly and threw her arms above her head.

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"To build her nest near to my couch I'll call her!
Why go so far dark and strange skies to seek?
Safe would she be, no evil should befall her,
For I'm an exile sad, too sad to weep!"

Mist-like floated across Rhoda's mind a memory of the trail, with voice of mating bird at dawn, with stars and the night wind and the open way. And going before always, Kut-le—Kut-le of the unfathomable eyes, of the merry smile, of the gentle touch—the music merged itself into Rhoda's dreams.

She spent the several following days upon the roof. Curled on her Navajo she watched the changing tones on the mountains and listened to the soft voices of the Pueblo women in the street below. Naked brown babies climbed up and down the ladders and paddled in the shallow river. Indian women with scarlet shawls across their shoulders filled their *ollas* at the river and stood gossiping, the brimming *ollas* on their heads. In the early morning the men had trudged to the alfalfa and melon fields, and returned at sundown to be greeted joyfully by the women and children.

Kut-le spent the day at Rhoda's side. They talked but little, though Rhoda had definitely abandoned her rôle of silence toward the Indian. Her mind during most of the day was absorbed in wondering why she so enjoyed watching the life in this Indian town, and why she was not more impatient to be gone. In the meantime, her health was returning to her wonderfully.

As the sun dropped behind the mountain Marie appeared on the roof, her black eyes very bright:

"Half-breed Philip find white squaw's hank'chief, give to white men, maybe! Marie see Philip get hank'chief from little girl."

Kut-le gave Rhoda an inscrutable look, but she did not tell him that she shared his surprise.

"Well," said Kut-le calmly, "maybe we had better mosey along."

They descended, to find Marie hastily doing up a bundle of bread and fruit. While Kut-le went for blankets, Rhoda donned her old clothing of the trail. Rhoda had been wearing the squaw's holiday outfit. Very shortly, with a hasty farewell to Marie, they were in the dusky street.

"Shall I gag you," asked Kut-le, "or will you give me your word of honor to give neither sign nor sound to any one until we get to the mountain, and to keep your face well covered with your Navajo blanket?"

Rhoda sighed. "Very well, I promise," she said.

In a very short time they had reached the end of the little street and were climbing an *arroyo* up into the mountain. When they reached the *piñons* Kut-le gave the coyote call. It thrilled Rhoda with the misery of the night of her capture. Almost immediately there was an answering call, and close in the shadow of the *piñon* they found Alchise and the two squaws. Molly ran to Rhoda with a squeal of joy and patted the girl's hand, but Alchise and Cesca gave no heed to her greeting.

The ponies were ready, and Rhoda swung herself to her saddle with a thrill, half of gladness at the touch of the muscular little horse, half of dread at the coming ordeals. And once more she rode after Kut-le with the mystery of the night trail before her.

THE sound of water falling, the cheep of wakening birds, the subtle odor of moisture-drenched soil roused Rhoda from her half sleep on the horse's back at the end of the night's journey. The trail had not been hard, through an endless pine forest for the most part. Kut-le drew rein beside a little waterfall deep in the mountain fastness. Rhoda saw a chaos of rock masses huge and distorted, as if an inconceivably cruel and gigantic hand had juggled with weights seemingly immovable; about these the loveliness of vine and shrub above them, the towering junipers dwarfed by the rocks they shaded, and falling softly over the harsh brown rifts of rock the liquid green and white of a mountain brook which, as it reached the level, rushed away in a roar of foam.

Rhoda's horse drank thirstily, and she stood beside him watching the mystical gray of the dawn lift to the riotous rose of the sunrise. She wondered at the quick throb of her pulse. It was very different from its wonted soft beat.

When Rhoda woke, late in the day, Kut-le had spread Marie's cakes and fruit on leaves which he had washed in the brook.

"They are quite clean, I think," he said, a little anxiously. "At least the squaws haven't touched them."

Rhoda and Kut-le sat on a rock and ate hungrily. When she had finished, Rhoda clasped her hands about her knees. She

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looked singularly boyish with her sombrero pushed back from her face and short locks of damp hair curling from beneath the crown.

"Isn't it queer," she said, "that you elude Jack and John DeWitt so easily?"

"The trouble is," said Kut-le, "that you don't appreciate the prowess of your captors."

"Humph!" sniffed Rhoda.

"Listen!" cried Kut-le, with sudden enthusiasm. "Once in my boyhood Geronimo and about twenty warriors, with twice as many squaws and children, fled to the mountains. They never drew rein until they were one hundred and twenty miles from the Reservation. Then for six months they were pursued by two thousand American soldiers, and never lost a man!"

"How many whites were killed?"

"About a hundred!"

"I don't understand yet," Rhoda shook her head, "how savages could outwit whites for so long a time."

"But it's not a contest of brains! Whites must travel like whites, with food and rests. The Apache travels like the living coyote, off the country! Your ancestors have been training your brain for a thousand years. Mine have spent centuries of days, twenty-four hours a day, training the body to endure hardships. You have had a glimpse of what the hardships of this country might mean to a white!"

As Kut-le talked, Rhoda sat with her eyes fastened on the rough face of a distant rock. As she watched she saw a thick, leafy bush move up to the rock. Rhoda caught her breath, glanced at the unconscious Kut-le, then back at the bush. It moved slowly back among the trees, and after a moment Rhoda saw the undergrowth far beyond move as with a passing breeze. She glanced at the nodding Alchise and the squaws, then smiled and turned to Kut-le.

"Go on with your boasting, Kut-le. It's your one weakness, I think."

Kut-le grinned. "Well, now honestly, what do you think that a lot of Caucasians can do with an enemy whose existence has always been a fist-to-fist fight with nature at her cruelest? We have fought with our bare hands and we have won," he continued half to himself. "No white man or any number of whites can capture me on my own ground!"

"Boaster!" laughed Rhoda.

Just beyond the falls an aspen quivered. John DeWitt stepped into view. Haggard and wild-eyed, he stared at Rhoda. She raised her finger to her lips, but too late. Kut-le, too, looked up and raised his gun. Rhoda hurled herself toward him and struck up the barrel. Kut-le dropped the gun and caught Rhoda in his arms.

"The woods are full of them!" he grunted.

Then, with one hand across Rhoda's mouth, he ran around the falls and dropped six feet to a narrow back trail.

"My own ground!" Rhoda heard him chuckle.

TO BE CONTINUED

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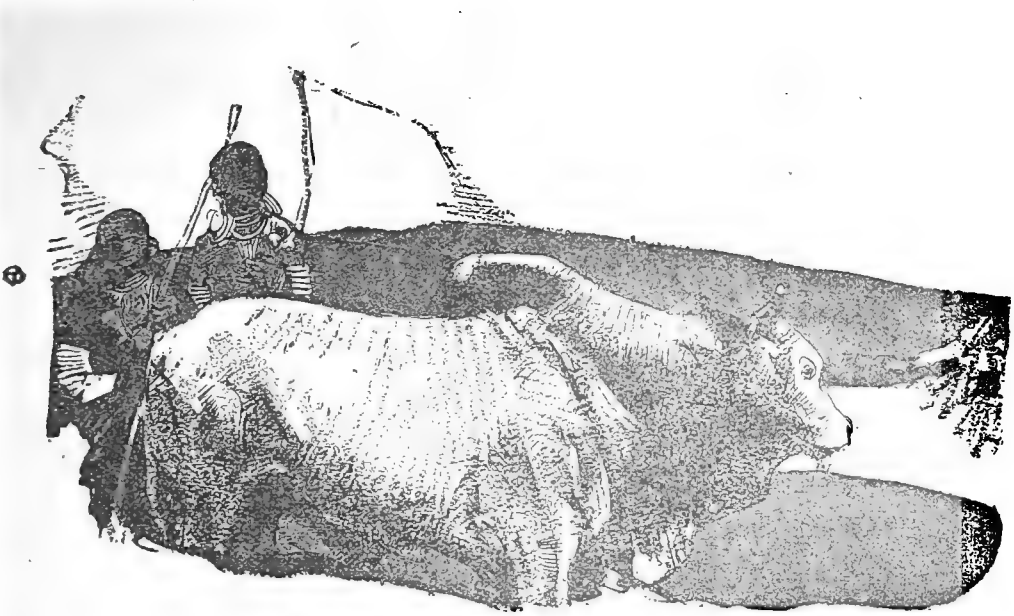

John Boyes—African Monarch

by W. Robert Foran

WHEN the spirit of the *wanderlust* and adventure enters your blood, it brooks no denial. They who are fortunate enough—I say fortunate advisedly—to receive the call to travel in and explore the far corners of the world, never for one moment regret it. Although at first thought the oft-repeated and generally accepted theory that a "rolling stone gathers no moss" may appear to be eminently apt, yet it is frequently proved a fallacy by the men who, to a large extent, are responsible for the building up of vast empires. Take the case of the old Portuguese raiders under Vasco da Gama and his lieutenants. No one could accuse them of being poorer for their adventurous sailings, neither financially nor from the standpoint of knowledge gained.

Such, at least, has been the experience of John Boyes, erstwhile King of the Wa-kikuyu, who rose from cabin-boy to the dignity of absolute ruler over thirty-six African tribes comprising part of the Kikuyu race. His adventures rival even those of Rider Haggard's picturesque hunter, *Allan Quartermain.*

As he looks back upon the vista of years, he will proudly tell you that he has achieved much and learned more. His is no mean record when one considers the handicaps he had to contend with. His story is one of thrilling adventures, carried to a successful ending by adroit bluff, diplomacy, nerve and sheer cold-drawn pluck.

I first met John Boyes in 1904, when I was serving as an officer in the British East African Armed Police. My impression of him, gained then, has not altered one jot. I see before me, even now, the figure of a quiet little man, shrewd of face and tanned by contact with exposure to the all-powerful rays of the Central African sun, breathing the atmosphere of desert and trackless plain. He was unassuming and of few words, but every word he uttered was of deep significance. For years have I known him, and my interest in him and his extraordinary career has not lessened.

I was sitting in my office at the Kiambu Government station of the country of the Wa-kikuyu, when a short, thick-set white man, dressed in a dirty khaki suit, entered. He courteously removed his battered sun-

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helmet and smiled a hearty welcome as he held out his hand. I rose to greet him, taking his outstretched hand in mine.

"My name is John Boyes," he remarked pleasantly, as I motioned him to a chair. "Just come in from Abyssinia with a caravan of mules and ponies."

That was all. Simple enough words in all conscience, but behind them lurked a history of untold dangers endured unflinchingly, of hardships innumerable, of days and days of anxiety. Yet, judging by his calm exterior, he might just have arrived from Nairobi, the capital of East Africa, less than ten miles away.

It was not until we had finished dinner and settled down to our cigars that I was enabled to learn something of the man. Of course I had made him gladly welcome, for I had heard of him. Who in East Africa had not?

I asked him for his life story, and after a little persuasion this modest little man told me a tale which might well have added gray hairs to the head of the most seasoned veteran of all the world's great "Lost Legion." Yet Boyes had not a gray hair in his head.

He was just as boyish looking as the lad fresh from college. But wait, I am wrong, for at second and closer scrutiny one might have seen crow's-feet around the corners of his clear brown eyes. Here and there a few lines on his face told the story of many an anxious moment. A kindly face you would have said, and not been wrong in your estimate; but behind that quiet, unassuming manner of his breathed a love, deep and insatiable, of adventure.

FROM CABIN-BOY TO KING

BORN in Hull in the late seventies, John Boyes started life as a cabin-boy and cook on a North Sea fishing-smack. Not much of an education from the book-learning point of view, but an education in all the manly qualities of pluck, endurance and good comradeship which money and schools could not procure for him. Here he learned his love of adventure. Here he was trained by rough men and brave to face every conceivable hardship fearlessly and without murmur. What he learned on this little fishing-smack in the trough of the mighty waves of the turbulent North Sea stood him in good stead in after life. He has not forgotten it yet.

This same lesson made him king of nearly half a million untutored savages and a great tract of land, which, although politically in British East Africa, was practically unknown and unexplored before his advent.

Later he joined a merchantman, serving before the mast, and sailed away to the Cape of Good Hope. Leaving his vessel at one of the South African ports, he made his way up into Matabeleland and fought through the campaign of 1897. Here he met an old hunter named Elstop. He has to thank Elstop for his further desperate exploits.

Drawn to this youngster by ties of common love of adventure, Elstop unfolded before his eyes an alluring tale of the old days in Northern Rhodesia.

He told of the herds of mammoth elephants roaming about forest and plain, waiting for some hardy hunter to come and take their ivory tusks. He told of the native chiefs and their peoples in the vast unexplored interior, who had never seen a white man.

The lad listened with mouth agape and eyes glistening, drinking in the old hunter's every word. Already, in imagination, he saw himself hunting herds of elephants for their tusks and taking large caravans of this valuable commodity to the ports for sale; he saw himself seeking tribes who had never seen a white face and compelling them to do his every bidding.

His heart was on fire at the prospect, and he plied Elstop with question after question, until he seemed a veritable walking mark of interrogation.

The old hunter willingly gave him all the information in his power, and finally assured him that he could find such things as he had described, if he would travel further north into the territories bordering on those explored by Stanley, Livingstone, Speke, Thompson, Burton, Sir Samuel Baker and others. The lad's mind was made up. He would push on into this wonderful, unknown country.

Presently they parted, the old hunter to return to his hunting fields, and Boyes to seek the wherewithal to carry out his desires. In due course Boyes took steamer up the East Coast of Africa and on arrival at Zanzibar transferred to an Arab dhow which was on the point of sailing for the old Portuguese and Arab Island of Mombasa, which now is the busy and prosperous port of British East Africa.

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BOYES TAKES A DESPERATE CHANCE

AT THE time of his arrival at Mombasa, the great Uganda Railway was in course of construction. On landing, Boyes heard on every side of the dangers which the construction gang were daily subjected to by the attacks of the nomadic and fierce tribes of the interior. He heard of the Indian laborers being dragged in the dead of night from their tents in the railhead camps to be devoured by a ravenous man-eating lion within hearing of their comrades, who were powerless to interfere.

Undaunted, he secured some transport work for the railway construction engineers. For the most part he had to cart foodstuffs and material to camps which the rails had not yet reached. He started with but few dollars to his name, and borrowed the necessary capital to outfit his transport. In a few months he had an outfit of his own.

Then, as if his achievement had not been merited, disaster overtook him. All of his transport donkeys, except one, died of some dreaded tropical disease. Boyes set himself to rebuild his shattered fortunes. He found that all the food for the workers on the railway had to be brought up from the coast, which entailed heavy expense and loss of time. He got the idea into his head that there must be a lot of food in the native territories ahead of the railway construction gangs. Careful inquiries from missionaries and Government officials returning from Uganda across the Victoria Nyanza disclosed the fact that there was an unknown land, called Kikuyu, which was reported to be rich in cattle and crops. It lay to the north of the beaten track, across plain and over mountain to Uganda. The natives were reported to be fierce and treacherous. This did not disturb Boyes at all. It made it all the more interesting.

Only two white men had been through this territory, and the Government had sent in a number of parties which had been massacred. This decided Boyes that herein lay his chance of redemption of his hitherto ill-starred fortunes. He decided to make the trip and risk success or probable death.

Just as he was preparing to start out, news came in of the massacre of a party of British levies and Captain Haslam of the East African Rifles. Undismayed, Boyes commenced his journey.

It is difficult to get any lucid account of his trip out of this modest little man, but I gathered from a few hints he let drop that it was not a bed of roses nor a path strewn with peach-blossoms.

WORKING MAGIC AND LEADING ARMIES

ARRIVED in the Kikuyu country, Boyes met a friendly disposed chief named Karui. At first he was looked upon with a considerable amount of suspicion by the chief's followers. Boyes set about proving to them that it was impossible to kill him. He found they knew about guns, but he persuaded them after considerable argument that his was a special kind of gun. He loaded it with a solid cartridge and sent the bullet through a tree. He showed them the hole where it went in, and then the one where it had come out. They were only partially convinced. Boyes was seized with a sudden and rather brilliant idea. He told them that it had gone through the mountain beyond their village also. They were incredulous, and ran to the mountain to search for the hole. Fortunately for Boyes, they actually found a hole in the mountain, and, being inspired by faith at this miracle of miracles, actually believed his boast.

Next he showed them how he drank boiling water. He poured some effervescing salts into some water, and they, seeing it bubble up, thought that he had made the water boil. When they saw him drink this harmless and beneficent medicine they prostrated themselves in fear. Boyes told them that it was the custom of white men to drink boiling water and that they could do so with impunity, for they had iron insides, which was the reason why the natives' spears would break if they tried to kill him.

A few more little tricks which he had learned while in the North Sea fishing-smack convinced them that a new god had come among them. He kept them in dread of him by an innocent chime clock, which he assured them would bring or stop rain at his will. His last magic was the use of a phonograph, which he warned them contained the spirit of a god. Thus, by these simple, childish methods, did Boyes start his great kingdom.

Two weeks after he had set foot in the Kikuyu country, John Boyes set out on his return journey to the railway camps with over two hundred loads of food, which he sold to the Government for two thousand

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dollars. He had paid for the food with trade goods, colored beads, wire, American linen cloth, and other simple things.

Again and again Boyes returned to the Kikuyu country, each time bringing back food supplies at great profit to himself. On each of these trips he made more simple magic for the childish black warriors, so that his reputation traveled far and wide.

Now the country was divided up into small tribes that were continually at war with each other. Each mountain had its own clan, and Boyes found that many young men had never been off their own mountain-side, because if they had done so they would have been killed by the neighboring tribe. A great many of these natives hated the white men, for they thought he was diseased on account of his fair skin.

While Boyes was away at the railway camps with one of his food caravans, one of the tribes raided his friendlies, burned some of their villages and carried off some women, sheep and cattle.

It seemed to Boyes that it was up to him to revenge this unjust attack, and he did so in his own way, without appeal to the might and power of the British Empire as represented in East Africa. He led forth his tribe to battle and, after a sanguinary conflict, attained the upper hand. The white man is always much cleverer at strategy than the black man. Time after time, as occasion demanded it, Boyes led his little army against the other tribes, invariably winning a victory over them.

A WHITE KING IN THE JUNGLE

AFTER each success he made friends with the hostile chief and gave him presents. The chief thereupon joined the friendlies under him. Some of the numerous unfriendly tribes joined his following of their own accord, realizing that Boyes was probably invincible. In course of time Boyes amalgamated thirty-six chiefs, with whom he swore blood-brotherhood, until he had accumulated an army of more than five thousand warriors whom he could collect in a day or two as he needed them.

Meanwhile, in the intervals of warfare, Boyes was doing a large and increasing trade in supplying the workers on the Uganda Railway with the wherewithal to live. He was sending in a thousand loads at a time—that is to say, about six thousand pounds—of flour made by grinding up cereals and dried bananas.

Whenever Boyes, or King Boyes, moved about his kingdom he was accompanied by his bodyguard of thirty of the best warriors picked from among the tribes he had conquered. He armed them with rifles and drilled them so that they could go through the manual exercises of the British Infantry drill-book to the English words of command. Not a bad achievement for a cabin-boy! He dressed them in khaki uniform and paid them in trade goods at the rate of three dollars and fifty cents a month, which is a big wage for a native even in these advanced days of civilization in East Africa.

To each chief who joined his monarchy Boyes gave a red fez cap and a bright scarlet blanket, with which they were mightily proud and happy. In addition to the swearing of blood-brothership with the chiefs, Boyes went through the ceremony of *piga-sengi* with the various tribes under his rule. This ceremony is an elaborate ritual of swearing friendship with each other, in which the death of a goat plays a prominent part.

In ruling his subjects, King Boyes interfered as little as possible with the ancient tribal laws. At a trial the chiefs would ask his judgment, but he invariably told them to deal with the case precisely as they would have done if he had not been present. If this latter-day Solomon thought that the accused should be acquitted, he would make a speech explaining the case in the Akikuyu tongue, with which by this time he was thoroughly proficient, and secured his release. The native scale of fines was one hundred sheep for killing a man, thirty sheep for killing a woman, and so on downward, with a fixed tariff for every offense in their calendar.

AT LAST all was peace in this vast kingdom, and Boyes' power was unquestioned. The natives had come to look upon him as their father, their doctor and their magician, in addition to their king.

One day Boyes heard there was a famine among the tribes of the Wa-kikuyu near Nairobi, which at that time was little more than a camp for travelers to and from Uganda, and determined to try to relieve them, although they were not in his territory.

The famine-stricken people were ringed

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round with hostile tribes, and so unable to get away from their foodless land to other places where there was plenty. The horrors of which he heard—they were dying in scores daily—constrained King Boyes to set out to their relief. He took an armed party with him and brought two or three thousand of them through the hostile tribes and distributed them over the villages of his own people.

Boyes tells with a grim smile of the hand-to-hand fights he had with the natives on this errand of mercy. He does not tell very much, but what he does say shows that the days were full of excitement and that he daily faced death and torture. In his own country there was plenty, and the poor starved wretches soon regained their spirits and health.

These rescued natives, living near the Uganda highroad, had quite often come in contact with whites, and were more sophisticated than their brothers on the slopes of Kenia. Incidentally, they were more intelligent. To them Boyes was not the awful and invincible god that his own subjects considered him. As a consequence, Boyes soon had trouble with them. The African native is ever the slave of base ingratitude.

But with an iron hand this cabin-boy king put down the mutinies and quelled the dissatisfaction of his peoples. When rain finally came and there was plenty of food in the strangers' country, Boyes decided to send them back to their own territory. This was not so easy of accomplishment as it would appear to be. He found that there was a lot of trouble in store for him before he could get them to leave his territory for their own. In fact they did not like going back at all, and took their enforced banishment unkindly.

In revenge they told the Government officials at the railhead, and the district officer at Nairobi, a number of grossly exaggerated stories of what King Boyes was doing in his kingdom. This made the Government take action, and they shortly afterward set up a station at Kenia, about fifty miles from King Boyes's capital.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE BOYES KINGSHIP

BOYES was desirous that everything should be peaceful and, wishing to make the work of the Government officers as easy as possible, collected his chiefs and prepared to take them to this new post and formally introduce them to the officer in charge.

The chiefs agreed to this plan, and they set out. Since each chief insisted on taking his own personal retinue, and there were thirty-six chiefs, the entire party numbered something over one thousand strong. When they arrived near the Government station, Boyes went on ahead, in case the Government officers might take alarm and mistake the party for a hostile force and commence shooting.

Boyes explained what he had done, and the officials said it was a good idea and asked him to breakfast. While the meal was in progress, Boyes's bodyguard was arrested, and the officials asked Boyes to disarm the other natives. This done, he was told to consider himself under arrest!

He was charged with waging war, setting *shauri*—that is, taking part in palavers, when he had no business to do so—personating Government by flying the Union Jack, having his men in uniform, conducting six punitive expeditions against the natives, and dacoity—robbery under arms when the robbers number more than five in one party. Here was a formidable array of charges to place against a king!

Boyes naïvely remarked to me when enumerating the offenses:

"I think that was all."

A force of Government soldiers was sent to Boyes's capital at Karui's and collected evidence from his own people of their king's doings. Boyes himself was sent under strong military guard to the old fort at Mombasa, which was built in 1593 by the Portuguese under Thomas de Coutinho de Souza, one of Vasco da Gama's imitators. Later, he was let out on a bail of three thousand five hundred dollars. He was subsequently tried by a judge and jury.

The idea apparently got abroad among the Government officials that Boyes had been killing and oppressing the natives. It is ever the lot of the adventurer to be misunderstood, and his motives are invariably distorted. The officials brought two hundred of his subjects to give evidence against him, but they all swore in his favor, saying that Boyes had been good to them and that they wanted him back to rule over them, for never before had they known such peace and plenty. As a consequence, the case for

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the prosecution fell to the ground and Boyes was acquitted.

Afterward, Boyes led Sir Charles Eliot, the British Governor, through the country, and, as intelligence officer, accompanied a military punitive force against a tribe which had always harassed him.

But, of course, after the Government interfered it was never the same again. So Boyes resigned his kingship and wandered further afield to pastures new, where the long arm of the Government and the civilizing effects of the advancing white race would not interfere with his love of adventure and hazardous exploits.

BOYES, no longer an African king, except in name, took long trips through German East Africa, through Abyssinia, and then went hunting elephants in the Congo, or rather the Lado Enclave section of it. He is one of the few white men who have entered Abyssinia through Addis Abeba, the capital of the Emperor Menelik, and brought a caravan through to East Africa. His adventures on this occasion would comfortably fill a book.

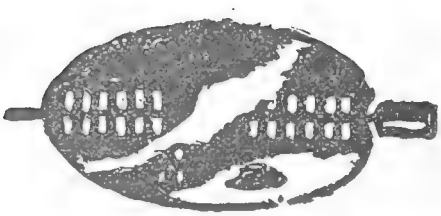
In the early days of February, 1910, Boyes was one of the party of ivory poachers in the Congo who came to Koba, on the banks of the Albert Nyanza, to greet Colonel Roosevelt and his party as they journeyed at midnight up the Nile. He has spent the last two years hunting elephants in the Lado at great personal risk, and incidentally profit, to himself. And now he has gone to settle on his six-hundred-and-forty-acre farm in his old country as a peaceful tiller of the soil.

Somewhat broken in health, yet cheerful and brave as ever, this cabin-boy king has settled down, like a patriarch of old, to tend his flocks and raise corn. To see him to-day as he is, one would not think that he held in his hand for a year or more the destinies of half a million naked, savage, untamed African natives. Yet this is the man who once was an uncrowned king. It is a strange fate that molds the destinies of men and gives to some power unlimited, which to others more worthy, perhaps, it denies.

Nevertheless, as Boyes will tell you with a grin, there are kingdoms aplenty awaiting the coming of a white man in little-known regions of Africa—in the Congo, for instance—provided always that he who would rule has the knowledge of the country necessary to make good his claim to kingship, and the pluck and resourcefulness to hold it when he has it. Only you must be the right sort of man.

Boyes has proved that he is the right sort of man; and no one in East Africa, and no one among the many men who proudly call him friend, will deny this.

Knocking round this world of ours in strange places, one sometimes meets men of Boyes's caliber. When one does, one takes off one's hat to them. For they, at least, are men!



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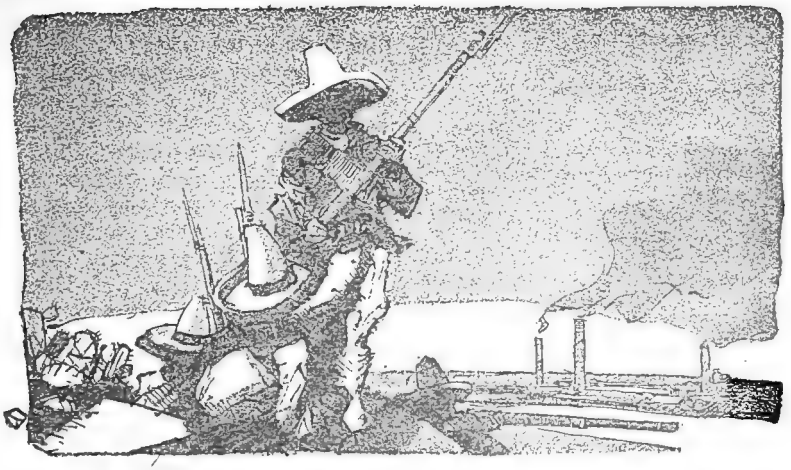

A Flier in Steel

A tale that is not laid in Wall Street

by Stephen Allen Reynolds

"THIS Tres Cavallos Mining Company is certainly one mysterious proposition," observed the auditor of the Kansas City Smelting & Refining Company as he ran over a column of figures for the third time and transferred the result to a ledger.

"What's wrong with 'em? Isn't their ore showing up any better?" inquired the fourth vice-president, looking up from an annual report.

"On the other hand, it's getting worse and worse," was the reply. "Their first shipment of forty cars paid them less than a thousand dollars after deducting duty, haulage and our smelting charges. Since that, each semi-monthly consignment has paid them less and less. Their last consignment made a ridiculous showing; for after deducting all the expenses they are entitled to our check for exactly sixty cents! Just think of that—sixty cents returns on forty cars of ore!"

"Have you had the tests verified carefully?" asked the fourth V. P.

"I've had Siebert check up the assays on the last three shipments, both before and after treatment. He's one of the three best men in the country, as you know. He says that the regular figures haven't varied three cents on the ton."

"Has the Company made any kicks about the returns?"

"No; that's the mysterious feature of the matter. I wrote them several weeks ago that their shipments were falling off in value at such a rate that unless they soon struck a richer body of ore they would find their stuff unable to defray its own smelting expenses, to say nothing of the cost of getting it out of the ground and hauling it up here from Mexico. What do you suppose they answered?"

"I give it up," was the terse reply.

Entering a vault the auditor disappeared for a moment, but soon returned with a file of correspondence from which he extracted a letter.

"Read it yourself; it's worth while."

The fourth V. P. busied himself with the typewritten contents of the communication; but the farther he read, the deeper grew his perplexity, for the remarkable document read as follows:

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COMPAÑIA MINERA TRES CAVALLOS,
CUAJARA, MEXICO.

Kansas City Smelting & Refining Co.,
Kansas City, Mo., U. S. A.,
Gentlemen: May 5, 1911.

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your unsolicited letter of advice of the 18th ultimo. In reply thereto you are advised that we pay you to smelt and refine our ore irrespective of your opinion as to its value. In anticipation of the possibility that our next few shipments may decrease in value to such an extent that the ore will not pay its own way, we are sending you a check for ten thousand dollars ($10,000) drawn to your order, and certified by the First National Bank of El Paso, Texas. You may draw upon this amount in case of a deficit. Our Mr. Casey, who travels with our ore trains, will hand you this check upon his next arrival in your city.

Very truly yours,
M. J. Flynn, President.

"Casey showed up with the check, and it was honored," went on the auditor as the F. V. P. laid down the letter. "Furthermore, he seemed to have money to burn, and asked me to show him the town. I complied with his wishes, but didn't have to use any of our entertainment fund because he wouldn't let me spend a cent.

"He wound up by wanting to know if there was such a thing as a faro game running in town. I left him after telling him that I believed 'High Card' Kelly ran a quiet game at the Albion; but he told me the next morning that he had found Kelly's game and dropped two thousand. It didn't seem to worry him. He laid over here for three days, and I showed him all over our plant. He seemed to be such a decent sort of a chap that I thought I'd put him wise to a little money-saving wrinkle that would save his company a few hundred dollars on each shipment."

"What was that?" asked the F. V. P.

"Why, you see, the Tres Cavallos people own their own cars. When they bought up the old San Pedro property at Cuajara last year they purchased forty old box-cars from the Santa Fé. They had these cars repaired and painted. Coal gondolas would have been cheaper for them. Their low-grade stuff would have been safe enough in the open cars. Instead of that, they run those forty cars up here every two weeks with as much ceremony as if it were a bullion train from Colorado. The cars come in all sealed, and with Casey on guard in the caboose."

"But what about the money-saving wrinkle?" put in the other.

"I was just coming to that," continued the auditor. "In checking over the gross weights of one of the last shipments, I discovered that each car could not have been loaded to more than half its capacity. I pointed this out to Casey, and showed him that his company was paying the Santa Fé for hauling forty cars, when the same weight of ore could have been hauled here in twenty cars. Casey thanked me and said that he would call the attention of his president to the matter."

The auditor laughed as he finished speaking, and then held out a telegraph form. Looking over the yellow slip, the F. V. P. read the following:

K. C. S. & R. Co.,
K. C., Mo., U. S. A.
We pay you for smelting ore, not for advice as to how we should load our cars. It suits us.
Compañia Minera Tres Cavallos,
M. J. Flynn, President.

"What do you make of that?" asked the auditor.

"It's a rum game of some kind," declared the other. He stroked his neatly trimmed Vandyke in silence for some moments, lost in reflection, and then went on: "It looks to me as if a lot of handsomely engraved mining-stock certificates will soon be on the market over New York way; and that copies of our official reports will be distributed to a trusting public showing that this Three Horse Mining Company has been shipping up eighty cars of ore per month to us for some time past. They will, of course, omit to state the value of the shipments."

"But what good will that do 'em?" queried the auditor. "These people know very well that we can't lend our name to any get-poor-quick scheme for deceiving investors as to the value of the ore. Why, almost any apprentice boy around the furnaces knows that the ore from the Tres Cavallos Mine bears scarcely enough silver and copper to make it worth while reducing! They can't expect to milk the public through us.

"There's another thing I'd like to know. Why don't they have their stuff treated by the El Paso Reduction Company? The E. P. R. are up to date and just as cheap as we are. If the ore was refined at El Paso,

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the Three Horse outfit would save the price of the long haul 'way up here. It's about as clear as mud to me!"

"Yes; it's a hard nut to crack," agreed the F. V. P. "At any rate we can't get stung. Watch their ore carefully, and if it runs below charges, draw on their deposit. If you exhaust that, force them to put up another reserve fund before you handle a pound of their stuff."

"Right you are!" declared the auditor. "If some crooked scheme's on the schedule, this company won't be the goat."

II

MICHAEL J. FLYNN, since his railroading days better known in certain Latin-American circles as "*Simpatico*" Flynn, finished a T-bone sirloin at the Silver Grill, and then hunted up a tailor. His stained and dusty business-suit sponged and creased to his satisfaction, he strolled down El Paso's main thoroughfare headed for the Santa Fé freight-yard.

"How's Number Four this morning?" he inquired of the assistant dispatcher as he entered that official's office and seated himself in the most comfortable chair the room afforded.

"Left Lascruces on the dot; due here in twelve minutes," was the reply as the operator accepted two fat black cigars and glanced at the clock over his bench. "Say, Mike," he went on, after biting off the end of one cigar and pocketing the other, "what's all this excitement about Four?"

"Why? Have you got orders to hold it?" returned Flynn, Yankee fashion.

"No, not yet; but those three men out on the platform in front of the freight-house yonder seem to be interested in it; and I happen to know that two of 'em are Department of Justice men, and the other feller a Mexican official of some kind of other."

Flynn's light-blue eyes narrowed a trifle as he looked out of the window at his elbow and perceived three men pacing the platform beside the down track.

"What do they want?" he asked gruffly, turning his bronzed face once more toward the assistant dispatcher.

"They wanted to know if Four was on time," was the reply. "They also asked me if the Tres Cavallos cars made up the train, solid; and whether you'd been up from the mine lately. They seem mighty anxious."

"What did you tell 'em?" asked Flynn, his voice even, his face inscrutable.

"I told 'em that she was on time; that probably two-thirds of the train was made up of the Tres Cavallos empties; and that I never kept track of your comings and goings. What's wrong, Mike, anyhow?"

"Everything's wrong," replied Flynn, gloomily. "General Pando and two thousand men are sewed up at Cuajara—Federals all around 'em. Pando's men have got stacks of Mausers and sword-bayonets, but they're shy of ammunition. The cat's out of the bag at last. The Federals got wise to the private arsenal at the mine, and closed in.

"Listen, Billie. There's no secret about it now, Casey and I have been delivering arms for the Junta at the rate of four thousand each trip. The second-hand Mausers cost us ten-fifty in New York; and after paying the freight to Kansas City and other expenses, we double our money on 'em delivered at Cuajara. Now, we——"

"But how in the world did you get the goods past Juarez?" broke in the other.

"Our own cars, overhauled and re-sheathed inside, six inches of space between new and old sheathing—a hundred Mausers per car each trip," growled Flynn disjointedly.

"So that's what the game was? I thought it funny when I heard you were at the head of a mining company."

"Yes; and 'twas a good game, too, until somebody sold us out. Guess it was one of the bunch that the Junta sent up to K. C. There were too many in the secret for it to last long. I knew it was all off when the Federals closed in on us; and after dark last night I crawled for nearly two miles on my belly, commandeered a pony from the first *jacal* outside the lines, ducked a few bullets, and made Magdalena in time to connect with the midnight local from Chihuahua. She was loaded with Federal infantrymen and gunners for Juarez, but nobody bothered me, and I've had two hours' sleep and my breakfast."

"Too bad, Mike, but it looks as if you'll have your trouble for your pains. The train'll be held up for certain; and if those people on the platform have the goods on you, you'll be pinched on sight."

"Billie!" Flynn leaned toward the assistant dispatcher and whispered impressively-

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"There's three million rounds of Mauser cartridges in clips coming in on Four!"

A LOW whistle came through the blue haze surrounding the railroad man.

"She's simply *got* to get through to Cuajara!" Flynn continued, hoarsely. "Pando has my sacred word of honor that I'd deliver the goods or croak in the attempt. Besides, I've only had the expense money so far out of the Junta, and I stand to lose a barrel of money. I couldn't get deliveries on the ammunition until last week, and now the destiny of the whole Republica Mexicana is tied up on Four. Pando's men haven't got five rounds apiece. There'll be a massacre if the Federals get wise. There's a magazine Mauser in every *jacal* between here and Aguas Calientes, and practically every one is looking to Cuajara for the cartridge supply."

"What good'll it do you even if you got across with your cars? The Federals would wreck you before you got to Cuajara."

"No, I don't believe they would," returned the gun-runner. "You see, our stockade commands the tracks for two miles above the mine; and as the Federals will expect the cars to be held up at this end, they won't be looking for a train."

"Well, Mike, anything I can do for you, I will." The assistant dispatcher arose from his stool and seized Flynn's brown hand. "I haven't forgotten the hole you pulled me out of ten years back when I was pounding the key at Fort Worth and you were driving the Cannon Ball. I'll take a chance if you give me the cue. I'll stick, even if it means——"

The wail of a locomotive's whistle in the distance sounded faintly within the office. For an instant the monotonous clicking of the automatic relaying instruments was the only sound to break the silence.

"That's Four, at the yard limits," finally breathed the operator, his eyes upon the minute-hand of the clock.

Flynn's eyes flashed around the office until they rested upon a door opposite his seat.

"Lamp-room?" he ventured, taking in the smut-begrimed jamb and panels.

The other nodded affirmatively, wondering what plan his old friend had in mind.

"Good; I'll lay low in there," Flynn went on, speaking rapidly. "If those men out there have authority, matters'll come to a head in a few minutes and my partner Casey'll be pinched. Then they'll give you orders about the cars. Make 'em show their papers, and steer 'em in here where I can overhear everything that goes on. If they grab Casey, you try to get a chance to tip him off that I'm in the lamp-room and that I'll have him out on bail before suppertime to-morrow night—if I live!"

One of the trio of watchers approached the dispatcher's office at this juncture, giving Flynn barely time enough to gain the lamp-room and close the door behind him.

"I'm Special Inspector Wenrick of the Department of Justice," the stranger stated. "I want you to side-track all cars on this incoming train which may be consigned to the Tres Cavallos Company of Mexico. It's by order of the Attorney-General of the United States."

The speaker exhibited a gold-plated badge bearing the device of a crouching eagle supporting a pair of scales in its beak.

"Anything to oblige a gentleman; orders are orders," was the cheerful response, just as the ten-wheeler at the head of Number Four thundered by, followed by a seemingly endless procession of flats, gondolas, and box-cars.

Abreast of the semaphore a few yards below the dispatcher's office, the driver threw on his air, and with groaning brake-shoes and crashing buffers, the long train came to a standstill.

"What's it all about; the revolutionary argument over the river?" asked the assistant dispatcher in a genial way, simultaneously waving his hand to the grimy engine-driver in the doorway.

"Yes," answered the Government man. "If what we've been told is true, there's a pair of birds named Flynn and Casey that have been buying a lot of steel lately up New York way. They've got false sides in those closed cars back there stuffed with rifles and cartridges. There comes Casey now—I know him by sight. We'll nail Flynn inside of twenty-four hours, too."

FROM behind the partly closed shutters of the lamp-room window, Flynn saw his partner step lightly from the caboose into the waiting arms of the other two officers. He heard the assistant dispatcher order the ten-wheeler to the roundhouse. He heard the switch en-

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gine called out; and then all other sounds were drowned by a roar from the approaching Casey.

"Take your dirty claws off me, you Diaz lickspittle!" he said, contracting his powerful biceps and lifting the smaller of his captors preparatory to dashing him against the wall of the building.

"Cut it out now! Both of you!" cried out the special inspector as he sprang to the rescue of his Mexican adviser.

"The cheek of him!" commented Casey as he pulled down a coat-sleeve and adjusted his collar. "I'll have him understand that I'm under arrest by the United States Government, and that I'm not goin' to be stood up before a 'dobe wall to be murdered by a bunch of *tequila*-swillin' ex-convicts! I can't fly away; I haven't got a gun on me; so you can all keep your hands off until we can call a hack and drive to the jail in style."

"You're under arrest, Casey; charged with violating the neutrality laws," the special inspector informed the enraged prisoner.

"So I understand; but I'm not goin' to allow that shrimp to touch me," declared Casey, contemptuously indicating the Mexican with a flirt of his thumb. "He'd sell his mother's soul for a *centavo*."

"Mr. Garcia, you'll keep your hands off this man," Inspector Wenrick curtly directed. "We are perfectly capable of taking care of him."

"Where is Meester Flynn?" asked the Mexican, keeping just out of reach of Casey's brawny right arm.

"Go to the devil!" was the short reply.

"You may as well all come in here, gentlemen," suggested the assistant dispatcher. "There are chairs enough to go round, and I'll soon have those cars side-tracked where you can do as you like with them."

"I will stay on the platform and watch the cars," volunteered the representative of the Mexican Bureau of Intelligence, as the others accepted the invitation.

"Just a moment, Inspector, while I get another chair," said the railroad man as he strode toward the lamp-room. "I believe there's an extra one here somewhere."

"Mike!" he whispered softly to Flynn as the door swung to behind him. "As soon as I can get a clear track over the bridge I'll have the switch-engine hooked on to your cars. I'll call the engine crew over to the window and you do the rest. You'll have a clear track through Juarez. Look out for the Mexican on the platform."

Picking up an old cane-bottomed chair, the assistant dispatcher left the lamp-room, while Flynn, with all his senses upon the alert, took up his post at the shuttered window commanding a full view of the platform.

Five minutes passed, and an oil-burning switch-engine distributed the head cars among various side tracks, leaving the Tres Cavallos cars upon the main line with the caboose at the rear. Slowly, the switch engine backed down upon the seized cars. The knuckles of the automatic coupler clanked into place, and the main line was on the point of being cleared, when the assistant dispatcher hailed the switching crew.

"Hey, there!" he called. "All you boys step over here a minute. I've got special orders about that string of cars."

Flynn watched with set jaw and tense muscles. One by one the crew filed into the dispatcher's room. The Mexican alone remained upon the platform, some forty feet distant. The panting engine at the head of the shortened train was almost abreast of Flynn's window.

THE Mexican, indulging in a day dream in which rewards and promotion figured largely, heard a door close softly. Indolently turning his head, he was just in time to see Flynn thrust a broomstick through the handle of the door to the dispatcher's office. He gave a cry of alarm and sprang toward the gun-runner; but even as his brown hand slid toward his pocket holster, the mighty fist of the Irish-American crashed into his Adam's apple, and Garcia staggered back, falling to his knees.

Another second, and Flynn gained the seat in the cab of the deserted switch-engine. It took him but an instant to release the air brakes and open the throttle; and even as the officers struggled at the barred door the whine of the freed air and the roar of the oil-burner's exhaust came to their ears. Making a supreme effort, the Mexican agent staggered to the side of the slowly moving engine and drew his revolver; but as his face came abreast of the running-board, the toe of Flynn's number ten caught him fairly under the jaw.

With the sand-lever wide open, the spin-

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ning drivers bit upon the steel of the main line and with constantly increasing speed the brown box cars slipped by the windows of the dispatcher's office. The Government men and engine crew gave up their attempts to open the door and turned their attention to the fastenings of the closed window sashes, leaving Casey to his own devices.

"Flynn! By all that's holy!" he cried as he recognized his partner.

He was about to add a whoop of joy when an eloquent look from the assistant dispatcher silenced him. An index finger pointed to the door of the lamp-room. Quick to act upon the hint, Casey tore open the door and sprang through the open window to the platform. With sinking heart he surveyed the bare sides of the box cars. They were moving too rapidly, but he knew that the caboose at the rear of the train had a broad step and projecting hand-railing.

A crashing sound of shattered glass came from behind him. From the tail of his eye Casey saw the two Government men climb through the broken window and run toward him. At that instant the caboose came abreast of him, moving toward Juarez at a rapid rate of speed. Its shining hand-rail seemed to beckon to him. He braced himself for the fraction of a second, and then, inspired by his partner's daring example and nerved to a desperate effort by the proximity of the approaching officers, he flung himself at the flying car.

A jerk followed which seemed nearly to wrench his arms from their sockets. Casey, in a position more nearly horizontal than vertical, found himself being drawn through the air. Then came a sickening twist, and his feet sought the step of the caboose. His right foot grazed the edge of the station platform and the heel of the shoe was torn off in a twinkling. But Casey's wiry fingers retained their grip, and by the time the remnant of Number Four rattled over the fish-plates on the first span of the International Bridge, he had not only gained the rear platform of the caboose, but had found time to thumb a farewell to the half-conscious, man-handled Garcia.

III

"UNLOCK that switch and throw those points before I dirty up this floor with your brains!"

Agent Muñoz, in charge of the first telegraph station south of Juarez, looked squarely into the brown muzzle of Flynn's automatic and concluded that the speaker meant business.

"*Vamos! Pronto!*" urged the man in the oil-soaked business-suit as he prodded the representative of the Mexican Central with the deadly end of the weapon.

With trembling fingers Muñoz ceased his efforts to call Chihuahua, and followed the gun-runner. The telegraph line to Juarez and the northward was dead, and he surmised correctly that the *Americano* and his limping *compañero* had cut it.

"How long ago did you get the message to ditch me?" asked Flynn as they crossed the tracks just ahead of the quivering switch engine.

"Five short minutes, señor," replied the agent as he fumbled at the lock of the switch lever.

"What did they tell you before your wire went dead?" asked Flynn, speaking in Spanish.

"To side-track your train, or send you down the main line to Chihuahua, but not to permit you to take the branch to Cuajara. An engine and flat-car with soldiers will follow quickly."

"I thought so," grunted Flynn.

He smiled grimly as he thought of his risky dash through the yard limits of Juarez, and then gave his attention to the switching of the train.

Slowly the rusty facing points swung over, and the branch line to Cuajara was open. Forcing the Mexican to accompany him, Flynn joined Casey in the cab, and ran the train slowly onto the branch until the rear trucks of the caboose were clear of the main line.

"Take this *hombre* back with you," ordered Flynn as he brought the train to a halt and handed his revolver to Casey. "Make him throw the switch over, and lock it. Then take the key away from him and get aboard the caboose. That'll hold the gang that's after us for at least ten minutes."

Hampered by the short wheel-base of the switch-engine, Flynn drove the oil-burner as fast as he dared. He had still eighty miles to run, and knew that a fast engine was in pursuit. The locked switch could not possibly delay the soldiers more than a few minutes; and he knew that once they caught up with him, the pilot of the pur-

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suing engine would be held against the rear platform of the caboose and the soldiers would swarm along the running-boards. Casey, armed with the automatic, might hold them off for a brief time, but the result would be the same. It would cost his partner's life in the bargain; and he himself was needed at the throttle.

Other matters troubled him as well. He feared that the oil might give out; and although the fire-box was adapted to the burning of cord-wood on top of the oil-sprayer, there was no time to spare in which to load it. More than twelve hours had elapsed since he left Cuajara. He might be too late, even if he pulled through.

The grass-thatched deserted *jacales* of Sapello appeared ahead, and with an eye to the nearly empty water-gage, Flynn brought up abreast of the water-tank. The windmill above the tank had ceased its creaking with the dying-out of the morning breeze, but as Flynn thrust the canvas hose into the manhole of the tender and pulled the valve-cord, the brown water rushed forth in a gratifying volume.

"It looks bad," Flynn observed, his eyes turned in the direction they had come.

"Ain't there nothing we can do, Mike?" called Casey from his perch on the fireman's seat.

"Not unless we had an aeroplane and a gang of men to rip out the ammunition from behind the sheathing to load it with," Flynn answered.

Casey, who had been ruefully eying his damaged shoe, looked at his partner with the intention of making an answer that would be heard above the sound of the rushing water. He had scarcely opened his mouth in reply before Flynn kicked the lid over the manhole and sprang to the road-bed.

ON A SIDING opposite the water-tank lay a string of construction cars, six in all. Five of them were laden with steel rails and ties, but the rear car was of the closed type, with small windows along its visible side. It was upon the platform of the latter that Flynn stood for one moment before kicking in the end door. He emerged a minute or two later bearing a canvas-wrapped package in his hands. Carefully depositing his burden upon the iron floor-plate beside the driver's seat, he released the air valve and opened the throttle a notch.

"I think we've got a chance if the oil holds out," he declared as he turned off the feed-valve a trifle and opened the throttle wider.

"What's in the bundle?" asked Casey, his voice pitched a tone above the roar of the exhaust.

"Six sticks of eighty per cent. blasting gelatine with the necessary fuse and exploders," boasted Flynn. "Twelve miles ahead there's a culvert over the left fork of the Santa Maria," he added grimly.

"Why don't you pull up and use the dynamite somewhere along here?" asked Casey.

"If they get too close to us, I will," Flynn rejoined. "But I'd rather make a clean job of it. Along here it'd only tear out a rail and a sleeper or two and make a little hole in the road-bed. They could patch it up in a few hours so that Federal reinforcements could be rushed down from Juarez. If we can stand 'em off until we get to the Santa Maria I'll put the road out of commission for a month."

From Sapello southward the constantly ascending grade compelled Flynn to open the oil feed-valve wider. Curving back almost upon itself, the steel road to Cuajara wound its way into the foothills of the Sierra Madres. Slower and slower grew their speed as the cars felt the double resistance due to curve and grade. Eight miles had been covered since the stop at the water-tank, when Flynn pointed out of the cab window.

"They've made good time," he declared.

Looking in the direction indicated by his partner, Casey gave a growl of disgust. Plainly visible through the clear air of the mountains the panorama of the valley lay spread out before him. Directly abreast, not more than three miles distant as a bird would fly, but at least triple that distance back along the tortuous course of the road-bed, he descried a flying locomotive.

A flattened layer of black smoke screened all else from his view, but as he continued to look, the smoke grew lighter in color, and for one fleeting instant, before a spur of the foothills cut off his vision, he saw a flat car black with men and fancied he caught the glint of arms.

"Did you ever handle dynamite?" suddenly asked Flynn.

Casey shook his head and surveyed the bundle upon the floor of the cab.

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"It's a good time to learn," went on Flynn, his voice ringing clear above the clatter of the laboring engine. "Unwrap that bundle and mind you don't drop those cartridges or step on the exploders. I'll tell you how to get the shot ready and it'll save us five minutes at the least."

Obedient to Flynn's curt directions, Casey unrolled the canvas and went on with the dangerous task. With fingers that trembled in spite of himself he untwisted the waxed paper at the end of the first cartridge. He then made a hole in the soft, grayish paste with the end of a lead pencil and inserted an exploder. Carefully laying the first prepared cartridge upon a bundle of waste which Flynn tossed to him he soon had the other exploders inserted and the waxed paper re-crimped.

"See if you can find a bit of copper wire in the tool-box," directed Flynn, simultaneously indicating a compartment beneath the fireman's seat.

A few moments more, and Casey had the deadly cartridges wired roughly together and the fuse attached and cut to a two-minute length. He had scarcely closed his pocket-knife and turned to his partner for further instructions when he saw Flynn close the throttle-lever and reach for the air-valve. A hollow roaring sound came from beneath the engine as the slowly moving train came to a stop well out on the culvert that spanned the fork of the Santa Maria.

Working rapidly, Flynn attached the explosive to the under side of a fish-plate at the junction of two rail-heads. He then ignited the triple fuses and sprang into the cab, just as a bullet flattened itself against the oil-tank of the tender. Less than a mile away, the sputtering locomotive of the pursuers had again appeared in view, and one of the occupants of the flat-car had tried a long-distance shot.

AS COOLLY as if lighting a cigar, Flynn threw over the reversing lever and backed up a few feet. The couplings between the cars well slacked, he once more reversed the engine and opened wide the valve of the sand-box. With a jerk which threatened to break the coupling links the engine leaped ahead and rattled over the culvert. Once across, their course bore almost directly south along the bank of the river, exposing Casey's side of the cab. With groaning journals the cars rounded the curve within fair gunshot of the pursuers.

A splintering sound and a stinging sensation in Casey's left arm warned him to drop to the floor of the cab in order to avoid more serious consequences. Flynn remained at his post, silent and impassive, nursing the engine around the curve. He seemed indifferent alike to the dynamite in the rear and to the nickel-jacketed bullets which either sang by him or flattened themselves against the steel work. A flying chip of ragged metal struck him a glancing blow upon his left brow. With a curse he seized a handful of waste and dashed the blood from his eyes.

Thinking that his partner had been seriously wounded, Casey, in spite of his own wound, was on the point of springing to his side, when a blast of warm air seemed to rush across the cab. Simultaneously a deafening crash resounded as the unconfined dynamite detonated. A litter of timbers and steel shot into the air, and the culvert over the left fork of the Santa Maria was impassable!

By means of quick action and the sudden application of brakes, the engine and flat-car of the Federals were brought to a standstill upon the very brink of the ruined culvert. Repairs were out of the question, and further pursuit was impossible.

IV

THE scorching rays of the afternoon sun beat down upon the main body of the revolutionary army besieged in Cuajara. From a slag-pile in the vicinage of the long-abandoned smelting plant a vast quantity of the refuse mineral had been secured with which the beleaguered forces had built themselves a bullet-proof barricade, circular in form and waist-high.

An army of men lay behind this barricade—an army of half-naked, half-starved patriots gathered from all parts of northern Mexico. *Peons* from the copper and silver mines of Chihuahua rubbed shoulders with Yaqui half-breeds from Sonora; *vaqueros* from Durango exchanged cigarette-papers and the "makings" with hardy American adventurers from beyond the border.

Liberated prisoners from a score of *calabozas* fraternized with monte dealers and

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other riffraff from the *cantinas* of four States. A sprinkling of uniformed deserters from the Federal army had cast in their lot with the revolutionists, bringing with them their Mausers and cartridge-belts. Men of all sorts and conditions from every walk in life met here on common ground, for one and all were agreed that the one-man rule of the Gray Wolf of Chapultepec must cease.

Within the barricade, around the shaft of the Tres Cavallos mine, was clustered a group of buildings with adobe walls, and roofs of galvanized iron. The largest of these, the Company *tienda* in the prosperous days before the rich lode "pinched out," now held stack upon stack of Mauser rifles surreptitiously smuggled into the country by the American agents of the revolutionary Junta. A small herd of beef steers driven in from the mountain ranges before the Federal forces had surrounded Cuajara bellowed in the Company corral once given over to the mules from the levels of the Tres Cavallos.

Stretching away to the northward, rusted by the nightly dews of the highlands and infrequent use, ran the Cuajara branch of the *Ferrocarril Centro de Mexico*, sloping gently upward to a point some four miles distant, where it disappeared from view and wound its way downward into the *mesas* below.

At three strategic points within the barricade a trio of automatic Maxims rested sullenly upon their tripods, their grim muzzles pointed toward the Federals more than two thousand yards away, beyond the zone of effective fire. A full belt dangled from the feed-block of each gun; but three heaps of belts with empty loops bore mute testimony that ammunition was scarce. Likewise the belts and pockets of the patriots were light; not a man among their number could boast of the possession of more than seven rounds, five being the average.

General Pando, a wiry, white-haired veteran who had served under Diaz when the French were driven from Mexico, paced the northern arc of the barricade with nervous strides, pausing every few minutes to turn his field-glasses upon the point where the railroad track disappeared. Twice nominated for the governorship of his native State, and rightfully elected to that office, suppliant tools of the Perpetual President had twice been foisted upon the people in his stead. Smarting under the treatment accorded him by his old commander, he had disposed of his *rancho* to a German syndicate shortly before the revolutionary wave swept all Mexico from Cozumel to Tiburon, from Matamoras to Salina Cruz.

AS THE afternoon wore itself away, deeper seemed to grow the lines in the face of the *Commandante* as he scanned the northerly horizon and realized that a Federal charge meant death to himself and followers—unless the ammunition-train got through in time.

"*Señor Commandante!*"

The General lowered his field-glasses and faced the aide-de-camp who had addressed him.

"There is a movement of the enemy to the eastward. They are approaching!"

Calmly the old soldier raised his binoculars and gazed to the right. The enemy, reinforced at this point by fresh arrivals, had commenced its advance in echelon formation. Even as he looked, the foremost battalion kneeled and volleyed. The answering patter of bullets upon the iron roof of the *tienda* indicated that the enemy was within range.

"You will make a circuit of the barricade at once," directed the commander. "Instruct the men to disregard the enemy until it approaches within three hundred yards. Reserve the magazine fire until the men can use fixed sights; and then make every shot tell!"

As the first battalion of the enemy reloaded and awaited the signal to rush, the battalion upon its immediate left advanced fifty yards, halted, kneeled and fired. Chips of slag flew into the air as the shots spattered along the barricade, and one of the men who had been peering over its top gave a queer little sob and crumpled into a heap. Two comrades picked him up and bore him tenderly to the dressing-station established in the shaft-house, but the American doctor shook his head at the blue hole visible just beneath the parting of the black hair and turned to another party of bearers.

With three-yard intervals between each two men, the deployed battalions of Federals successively took up the rush. The movement continued all along the line; the circle took on the form of a spiral, constantly tightening. Few bullets flew high at this

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juncture. The advancing troops had evidently received orders to aim low to avoid hitting their own men at opposite points.

Five hundred yards had been covered by the foremost of the enemy, and the restless ones among the besieged were nervously fingering their arms, when a sharp order from the *Commandante* brought two aides to his side. Less than a minute later a hundred willing hands were clearing the slag away from the main line, for a train was approaching.

Silently and swiftly the engine and cars slipped down the grade toward the beleaguered force while a detachment of the latter tore away the jagged barrier. The speeding train reached the Federal circle and passed through before there was time to spring a rail or draw a spike. The rattle of musketry came faintly to the ears of the men within the barricade as the Federals concentrated their fire upon the engine.

Neither smoke nor steam came from the flying engine. No whistle of defiance stirred the echoes in the valley. If living men were in its cab, they gave no sign. Closer and closer drew the train until the barricade was reached and passed. A cough came from the engine as the last pound of air was thrown on. The brake-shoes crashed against the spinning treads, the screaming journals ceased to revolve, and the end bumper-timbers of the oil-burner splintered upon the buffers at the end of the track!

A bloody face appeared at the cab window, and Flynn leaped feebly to the platform. The *Commandante* hastened to his side, but the Irish-American waved toward the head cars.

"First four cars have .303 for the Maxims—the others, Mausers in clips of five!"

He staggered, and sank to a sitting posture upon the rough platform.

The side-doors of the Tres Cavallos cars rattled; the false partitions were quickly ripped aside; the brown packages were tossed out to a line of men, and nimble fingers were soon stuffing the thimbles of the Maxim belts.

"We got delayed up the road," went on Flynn weakly. "Oil ran out just as we reached the summit—we coasted down the grade on gravity—you'd better get the *medico* to look at Casey—he's——"

General Pando bent his gray head closer, but the gun-runner had keeled over in a dead faint.

THE roar of the Maxims had long since died away, and the odor of barbecued beef floated into the open windows of the shaft-house. Flynn opened his eyes, and the first face he viewed was that of the American doctor.

"Hello, Doc!" he called faintly. "Where's Casey?"

"He's all right," was the smiling response. The medical man ceased rolling a bandage and indicated a neighboring cot. Flynn turned his head, sorely and painfully, and saw the recumbent form of his partner swathed in bandages. An orderly had just given him a few drops from a flask of *mescal* and was wiping the lips of the helpless man.

"He's got a bad arm," went on the doctor. "Also a Federal souvenir in the right shoulder. You lost a bucket of blood yourself. Rather a nasty gash over your eye, but you'll be fit inside of a week."

The doctor turned to give his attention to other sufferers, and Flynn closed his eyes for a moment. He opened them again and looked through the western window. Far away, the setting sun was slipping behind a notch in the Sierras. A puzzled expression came over his face.

"What makes it so quiet, Doc? How goes the fight?" he asked.

"Federals took it on the run when our Maxims began to speak. They drew out of range. Half an hour ago they ran up a white flag, and their *commandante* is now holding a palaver with Pando. He saddled up and met him half-way."

The doctor had scarcely ceased speaking when General Pando himself entered the shaft-house. With jingling spurs he approached the gun-runner, his fine old face radiant.

"Good news for you, Simpatico!" he burst out. "A truce has been declared! A little over a half an hour ago a heliograph message was flashed over the mountains from Chihuahua. The message was repeated from the Federal headquarters, and verified. The Gray Wolf has resigned the presidency and left the city! Our war is at an end!"

A rousing cheer went up from the men behind the slag-piles as the news was conveyed to them by a jubilant aide-de-camp. They were now patriots in fact—revolutionists and rebels no longer. General Pando emerged from the shaft-house and

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was immediately surrounded by a mob of enthusiasts.

"Doc!" called Flynn from his cot, "would you mind giving me a pull at that *mescal* bottle? I've just had bad news."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the *medico* as he folded his bared and bloody arms and gazed at Flynn in astonishment.

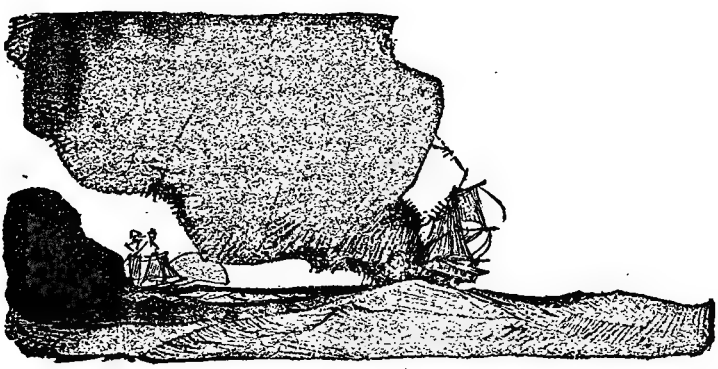
"Why, what worse news could you tell a professional gun-runner than that a war is over?" chuckled the Irish-American as his fingers closed around the neck of the flask that the orderly handed him. He took a light drink of the neat liquor, and then looked over at Casey.

The appetizing odor of the barbecue had grown stronger. The sound of rattling tin cups and plates came from around the corner of the *tienda*. The last rays of the setting sun shone upon a short row of blanketed forms awaiting burial on the morrow. With his eyes resting upon the rusty wheel at the head of the Tres Cavallos shaft, Casey spoke for the first time.

"It looks as if we've taken our last flier in steel, Mike. We'll now retire from the mining business," came from him faintly.

Flynn surveyed the row of box-cars across the way, and smiled grimly. "Well, at any rate, 'twas a good old mine," said he.

And the partners, unable to clasp hands, exchanged smiles.



Mutiny

by M. H. Worsley

THE great ball of the sun was sinking lower and lower toward the horizon, and the short West Indian twilight was at hand, to be followed by the wonderful tropic night. The ocean glowed like a sheet of hammered gold under the rays; the breeze was light and warm; the long, regular swell rolled down sluggishly from the northwest. The British twenty-four-gun corvette *Adventurer* rested lightly upon the water like a great sea-bird, her sails slapping idly against the masts when the breeze failed.

It was a May evening of the year 1799, in the time of the great war with the French. In that conflict, of twenty years' duration, the English navy gained such successes as probably no service has obtained before or since. Its glories were so many and so dazzling that they have come to be accepted as natural events. The mere record of them tends to become monotonous, and the sum total of all those countless sea victories is so immense that it raises that navy to a height which is beyond all criticism.

But the British fleet of those days was manned by human beings, not demigods; and it follows therefore that even upon that dazzling shield there were dark stains. There were stories of corruption and pecu-

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lation in the dockyards, stories of ill-found ships, of favoritism in high quarters, of officers in high places little fitted for command. But, above all, there were the instances of Captains in command of vessels who grossly abused their positions, turning the relentless iron discipline necessary in war-time to suit their own ends of cruelty or revenge.

The *Adventurer* was commanded by such an officer. Captain Bradstone had entered the service "through the hawse-hole," as the saying was, having worked his way up to his present position by sheer energy and courage. A good, practical seaman, a brute—but a brave brute—rough, uncultured, cursed by a fiendish temper and a narrow, suspicious mind, he was absolutely unfitted for his post.

He had been in command of the *Adventurer* for some six months. During that time things had gone from bad to worse. The best seamen were the worst used; floggings were of weekly, almost daily, occurrence; whenever the ship was in port there was a crop of desertions or attempted desertions. With a good first lieutenant matters might have run more smoothly, but unhappily Lieutenant Vincent was a man who closely resembled his Captain. For long there had been a tense feeling in the air; the men were gloomy and sullen; the officers, save the Captain and first lieutenant, anxious and watchful. But to-day matters were to reach a climax.

THE crew were at sail drill. Captain Bradstone stood upon the break of his quarter-deck, his grim, weather-beaten face raised aloft as he watched the men racing up the ratlines. Upon the other side of the deck stood young Lieutenant Kennedy, the officer of the watch, brown-haired, gray-eyed, little loved by his Captain, and loving him little in return.

There was silence fore and aft, no sound was heard save the shuffle of scores of bare feet upon the planking as the men crowded into shrouds and flew up the rigging. They were smart enough about it, but not smart enough to satisfy their commander.

"Lively there!" he roared, in his bull's voice. "I tell you what it is, my lads, you want the bo'sun's mates behind you! You would move more quickly then, I warrant!"

Lieutenant Kennedy turned aside with an impatient movement, his lips compressed. His Captain glanced in his direction for a moment, and seemed about to say something, but checked himself. By this time the crew were all aloft and in their places. They were to reef topsails, and already the men were swarming along the yards. Captain Bradstone stared aloft again, and seemed to fall into a sudden passionate anger.

"Maintop there!" he hailed. "Are you all asleep, you dogs? By the Lord, I'll wake you up! I'll flog the last man off the yard, do you hear? Perhaps that will make you move a little more the next time!"

There was a strange silence along the decks as the shout echoed away. The groups of men waiting by the ropes seemed to look at each other queerly as though asking an unspoken question. Then Lieutenant Kennedy turned round with a hasty motion and walked up to his commander.

"Your pardon, sir," he said quietly, "but if you really intend——"

"I did not address you, Mr. Kennedy," interrupted the Captain.

"No, sir," said the Lieutenant; "but may I point out that the two last men off the yard will be the smartest topmen, and therefore you will flog the best men?"

"I command this ship, sir!" exclaimed the other passionately, "and I do not permit my actions to be criticised!"

"I am aware of it, sir," persisted the Lieutenant. "But in this——"

"Another word, Mr. Kennedy, and I place you under arrest!"

A dull flush mounted to the Lieutenant's forehead; he saluted in silence and moved away again. Many eyes had watched the two men, and many ears had heard the altercation, but still nothing was said. The drill proceeded, the topsails were safely reefed. Captain Bradstone, his face grimmer than ever, waited for a few moments, then gave the fateful order:

"Way down from aloft!"

The two men at the ends of the main-yard, who in the natural course of events would be the last to come off it, heard the command, dashed recklessly past their fellows and sprang simultaneously for the ratlines. One reached the rigging safely—the other missed. For a moment his falling body was outlined blackly against the sky, he gave one loud shriek, and then struck the deck with a heavy, sickening thud.

Kennedy drew in his breath sharply and ran toward him, while, regardless of discipline, others clustered round. The man

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raised his head for a moment as the Lieutenant knelt by his side, gave a strange, terrible smile, then fell back dead, the blood pouring from his mouth.

The young officer gently placed a handkerchief over the face and rose to his feet. Captain Bradstone came up, breathing quick and deep, like a man who had been running.

"Is he badly hurt, Mr. Kennedy?" he asked.

"He is dead, sir!" answered the Lieutenant in a quiet, level voice.

The Captain stared down at the body for a moment, then glanced around in a sharp, nervous fashion. For a few moments he seemed dazed and shaken. As he looked at the circle of somber faces perhaps some premonition of the future seized him and gave to his face its haggard, furtive expression. The next moment, however, he had himself under command again.

"Pass the word for the carpenter," he ordered, "and take this man forward. We will bury him in the morning. And carry on there, carry on! I'll not have this skulking and idling!"

His commands were obeyed. The circle broke apart, though Kennedy noticed that the seamen again glanced at each other with the same questioning look. The body was carried away, and shortly afterward the Captain went down to his cabin. All seemed to go on as before, only Kennedy paced to and fro across the deck, his soul sick within him.

LIEUTENANT COOK, the officer of marines, came up to him, and fell into step in silence. Kennedy looked at him sharply.

"You saw that, did you not?" he asked quickly.

The other nodded.

"Yes," he said. "I only wish I had not. I hope our commanding officer enjoys his sleep to-night."

Kennedy gave a short, abrupt laugh, and gazed out across the sea.

"The men took it well," he said after a pause.

"Did they?" answered his companion dryly.

The Lieutenant looked at him again.

"Surely," he said in a surprised tone. "I had half expected trouble of some kind, but not one of them even said a word."

The other nodded emphatically.

"That's it," he said in a low voice; "that's exactly what I mean. If they had hooted and hissed or done anything like that I could have understood it. But this queer silence, and the way they seemed to look at each other—I can tell you, Kennedy, I don't like it, there's something wrong! And the men of my detachment were the same. I don't like it."

Kennedy smiled reassuringly.

"Tut, man, you imagine things," he said. "If anything was to happen, it would have done so when that poor fellow fell from aloft. But here is Nicholson come up to relieve me. I'm off below."

IT WAS the Lieutenant's turn for an unbroken night's rest, and he went to his cabin early. He was heavy and depressed with the day's events, and soon fell asleep. How long he slept before he was awakened he had no idea. But he was aroused by the noise of a pistol-shot.

In an instant he was out of his cot and hastily dressing. There came the noise of another shot, and then a confused, formidable tumult of shouting. In the silence of the tropic night this sudden roar of angry voices had an effect indescribably threatening and sinister. The Lieutenant snatched a pistol from the rack, picked up his sword, and rushed to the door. As he turned the handle his heart seemed to give a great leap. The door was locked and bolted from the outside!

Again came the sharp report of a pistol, apparently nearer at hand, then a man's voice calling for help, and the sound of a scuffle. Kennedy flung himself at the door and shook it furiously. There was a movement outside as of bare feet running upon the planking.

"Is that Mr. Kennedy?" called a sailor's voice.

"Yes," cried the Lieutenant. "What's wrong? Who locked this door? Come here, man, in God's name, and let me out!"

"You must stay there," shouted the deep voice in return. "You're safest there, your honor."

"What's that?" cried the young officer. "What do you mean? There's murder being done, man!"

"There's never a man aboard would hurt you, sir," shouted another voice, with a hoarse, passionate note in it. "We know

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you're our friend; there's not a hair of your head to be touched. But you'll stay where you are, if you please."

There was another pattering of bare feet as the men moved away. Kennedy stepped back for a moment and passed his hand over his forehead with a vague, nervous gesture. He was still heavy with sleep, bewildered and overwhelmed with the suddenness of it all. The men must have mutinied, must have risen suddenly in the night — there was no other explanation possible. And he was shut up impotently like a rat in a trap! He went up to the door again and gave ear intently.

There was a short silence for a few minutes, during which the Lieutenant could hear the loud, quick beating of his heart and feel the perspiration dripping from his forehead. Suddenly there was a regular fusillade of shots from the upper deck, and the shouting broke out again, louder than ever. Kennedy beat madly on the door, then, firing his pistol into the lock, pushed with all his strength.

The door still held, for something was evidently wedged against it from without. The Lieutenant desisted from his efforts and listened again, panting. The shots ceased, but the sounds of fighting and scuffling still went on. A great voice suddenly rang out, dominating the confused tumult.

"No more killing!" it shouted. "Take 'em alive, mates; take 'em alive!"

Gradually the sounds died away, until a sudden cheer rose up into the night. Silence again, broken by the creaking of blocks and falls and the splash of a boat being lowered into the water. Again a cheer boomed out, loud and triumphant, and there was a soft noise of oars in rowlocks. A voice shouted angrily at a distance, apparently from some one in the boat, but it was too far off for Kennedy to make out the words. And then silence fell once more, complete and final.

The night wore on; long hours went by; nothing more happened. Kennedy ceased to beat upon his door, and sat down on his cot, waiting for what might befall. They must come to him sooner or later; they surely did not intend to lock him in and let him starve to death. He longed ardently to know what had really happened.

That there had been a mutiny he never doubted, but what form had it taken? What was the meaning of that confused fight, the cheers, the lowering of a boat? And, above all, why had he been shut up and kept away from the whole affair? It was this last humiliation that set him on fire with anger and impatience. But it was all of no avail; he could only wait and be ready.

II

DAWN came at last with a sudden splendid flush in the sky, and his cabin was flooded with sunlight. He rose to his feet, feeling tired and jaded, and began to pace to and fro. Then at last he heard footsteps outside once more, something was rolled away, and his door swung open. Two men stood in the entrance, a marine and a seaman with his wrist bound round with a blood-stained handkerchief. They looked at their young officer in silence, but there was nothing threatening in their aspect.

"Well?" said the Lieutenant in a voice he tried to make calm. "And now?"

"Will you please to step on deck, your honor?" said the sailor respectfully.

Kennedy eyed him for a moment, then with a shrug he stepped out of his cabin and followed the two up to the quarter-deck.

It was a glorious morning. The *Adventurer* was under all plain sail, her decks brilliant with sun, the sails white as cotton, the great expanse of sea glittering all around her as if on fire. All seemed absolutely the same on board save for two things—nearly all the crew were on deck lounging about by the bulwarks, and there were no officers to be seen. Kennedy's conductors led him silently up to a man who stood near the wheel, then left him and went back to their fellows. An instinct told the Lieutenant at once that he was standing before the man who had organized the mutiny. He felt his face burn, and unconsciously clenched his hands.

"So, Henderson," he said quickly, "you are the leader of it all?"

The man named Henderson made no reply. Kennedy had known him as one of the smartest seamen on the ship, captain of the foretop, one who, in other and happier circumstances, might have risen far. He knew him, too, as a man of some little education. But what he felt he had never properly realized was the force, the personality, of this man who looked him in the face and met his gaze unflinchingly.

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"You have not been ill-treated, I hope, sir?" said the man at last.

"I must not complain," said the Lieutenant grimly. "I have been shut up by force, it is true, but others, I believe, have fared worse."

"You were safest there," answered the other. "The men—last night they might have forgotten that you were not like the rest."

"Henderson," exclaimed the Lieutenant, "tell me the truth. The men have mutinied?"

"Ay, sir," replied the seaman. "You would call it mutiny, I have no doubt."

"And the officers?" said Kennedy.

"We gave them food and water and sent them off in the first cutter—that is, all save Captain Bradstone and Lieutenant Vincent."

"And they?"

"They are dead!" answered Henderson, in a hard voice.

Kennedy stepped back a pace. "Murdered!" he exclaimed.

The other looked at him fixedly.

"Mr. Kennedy," he said passionately, "was my messmate, Frank Simpson, murdered yesterday afternoon? If he was, maybe these two were murdered, but not otherwise. Sir, I went alone to Captain Bradstone's cabin last night. I was armed, but I went alone. I awoke him, and I told him that we had determined to make an end of his tyranny. I said I'd meet him, man to man, with what weapons he chose. I was Simpson's friend, sir, and I told him that. He started up, snatched a pistol from a drawer, and fired at me. He missed, and was taking up another, when I fired and killed him! It was his life or mine, sir."

"And the First Lieutenant?" said Kennedy in a low voice.

"He would hear no reason," answered the other in a repressed voice. "He wounded two men, and then he was cut down. The men would have killed some of the others, sir, but I stopped them. A rare job I had of it! In the end we sent them off in the cutter, as I told you."

Kennedy looked at the deck in silence for nearly a minute.

"Well," he said at last, "it's not for me to judge you or to condemn you. Others will do that, I fear, before very long. But why, in God's name, am I kept here and not sent away with the rest of my comrades?"

"I'll tell you, sir," replied the sailor. "There's never a man of us can navigate this ship, and we've kept you to do it. You were the best of them all, sir; we all knew you thought for us and cared for us. You'll not refuse us now?"

"Navigate the ship!" repeated the Lieutenant. "But where? Henderson, you won't give her up to the French?"

A strange, dusky flush mounted to the other's face.

"Give her up to the French!" he cried. "No, sir; never that! I'd sooner blow her up with every man on board! Never that, sir! We rose against a tyrant, sir; we didn't rise against our country!"

"But what then?" questioned the Lieutenant.

"We must put her ashore," said Henderson. "It's our only chance of saving our necks. Somewhere on the main there's places to spare where the old pirates and buccaneers used to go. I'll fix on one, and you'll navigate us there."

"And if I refuse?" said Kennedy.

The other gave him a swift look.

"You must not refuse," he said. "I couldn't answer for the men if you did. See here, sir; once we're safe ashore you do what you like. You go your way, we go ours. You've seen the last of us then, you understand?"

Kennedy looked about him in silence. Respectful as the other's tone was, there could be no mistaking the veiled significance of his words.

"If I refuse," thought the young officer, "I throw my life away, but I effect nothing; at the most, I only drive these men to desperation."

"Come, sir," urged Henderson, "it's little we ask of you."

"Very good," said Kennedy, drawing a deep breath. "I'll do it."

"God bless you, sir!" cried the sailor heartily. "You'll never be sorry for it. Come with me now, sir. I'll get the charts, and you can tell us where we are. We've lost our reckoning."

The two went below, watched by many eager eyes.

Meanwhile, the *Adventurer* sailed on over the glowing, sparkling sea, nodding and courtesying to the long swell, dashing the white foam from her bows as if she, too, were a living thing rejoicing in the beauty of the morning.

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III

CAPTAIN DAVIES, of the West Indiaman *Cumberland*, stood on his quarter-deck and looked astern with a gloomy face. The wake of his big ship stretched out, white and foaming, until it faded away in the distance. Beyond it, some two or three miles away, there peeped up the topsails of another ship, having all the appearance of a man-of-war. Captain Davies eyed her with his chin upon his hand, and found little pleasure in the sight.

When it is considered that the value of his cargo was close upon a hundred thousand pounds, that his crew consisted of sixty men, and his guns of fourteen nine-pounders, and that the ship in chase was evidently a big French frigate, then his anxiety might fairly be justified. His men were at quarters and his guns run out. The passengers, male and female, had been sent below with little ceremony. He meant to make a fight for it if it came to the worst, but he knew well enough what the result of such a fight must be.

"She's the *Indomptable*, you say, Mr. Benn?" he said to his first mate.

"Yes, sir; the French forty-four gun frigate *Indomptable*," answered the other.

"And she has the heels of us?"

"She'll be within gunshot in an hour, sir!" said this Job's comforter. "She is sailing three feet to our two."

The Captain stamped his foot and bestowed a hearty sea blessing upon the French nation. Not for the first time he wished he had waited for a convoy instead of sailing alone in this period of war. He took another look astern, and then glanced up at the great, bellying sails.

"We're doing a good nine knots," he said, gloomily, "but she's a slow old wagon at the best of times. Lord! Mr. Benn, what wouldn't I give to see one of our own cruisers coming down on us!"

The mate made no reply, but swept the horizon stolidly with his glass. Suddenly he stood rigid, and his face changed.

"There's a sail, sir," he reported quietly, "over yonder to port."

Captain Davies looked eagerly. Over the edge of the horizon there did indeed peep up just such a white patch as the one that hung like a shadow in his wake.

"I see her!" he cried hastily. "I see her! Square yards, too, like a ship of war!"

He roared out an order and instantly a sailor was flying up the rigging. His hail came down after an interval which seemed almost interminable.

"A corvette, sir," he shouted, "standing toward us under all sail!"

The Captain's eyes were very bright.

"A corvette, eh?" he repeated. "And the other is a big frigate. Long odds, Mr. Benn, even if the corvette is British. If she's not, it looks as if our game's up."

"But if she's British, sir," said the mate, "she'll do her best for us."

Captain Davies made no answer, only stared anxiously through his powerful glass. The corvette was coming down fast, and it seemed as if her course would bring her right across the *Cumberland's* bows. Astern the big Frenchman was still storming along, taking no notice of the newcomer. Suddenly the latter shifted her course a trifle and seemed to steer directly for the *Indomptable*. Her hull was above horizon, quite plain to see. The long minutes went by, and on the *Cumberland's* deck there was absolute silence. All at once a ball of white smoke shot out from the *Indomptable's* side, and the water splashed up ahead of the corvette.

Captain Davies flung his hat into the air.

"She's British, then!" he shouted. "By the Lord, Mr. Benn, there will be a fight worth seeing!"

He never spoke a truer word. But, had he known the facts of the case, he might not have shown such a boyish exultation. For the corvette was the *Adventurer*, manned by mutineers.

TWENTY-FOUR hours had passed since Kennedy had been released and taken his place as navigator. Nothing had happened since then to make him regret his decision. The men continued to treat him kindly and respectfully, and, as to Henderson, there was growing up in the Lieutenant's mind a strange admiration for this ringleader of a mutiny. For Kennedy had feared riotous scenes, had dreamed of carousals on deck, of drunken men lying in the scuppers. But he had reckoned without Henderson and the strange dominion this common sailor had obtained over the minds of his companions.

The two men were standing together by the wheel this second morning after the mutiny. The *Cumberland* and the *Indomptable* had just been sighted, and the bul-

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warks were lined by scores of eager figures staring from under big brown hands. Kennedy handed a telescope to his companion in silence.

"A British West Indiaman," he said slowly, "with a French frigate in chase!"

Henderson gazed in turn. A strange look flitted across his face as he worked the long tubes—a look that the Lieutenant could not fathom.

"Ay, sir," he said, "you're right, you're right." He lowered the glass and gave a keen look along the decks. "Mr. Kennedy," he said with a queer thrill in his voice, "what shall I do, sir?"

The Lieutenant started at the sudden question.

"You command here, Henderson," he said, a trifle bitterly. "It's not for me to advise you."

Henderson's face was flushed and working. Unconsciously he rubbed his hands together.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," he cried fiercely and triumphantly—"I'm going to fight that frigate!"

Kennedy looked at him with an astonished face.

"Fight the frigate!" he repeated. "But what about the men, Henderson?"

The sailor laughed abruptly.

"I'm going to speak to them," he said. "You'll excuse me, sir, but maybe I've got a bit more influence with them than you think."

He shouted for all hands to lay aft. The Lieutenant waited in silence as the men came crowding to the quarter-deck. They were very quiet, but Kennedy noticed that they seemed excited and uneasy, continually glancing over the bulwarks to where the other two ships were looming nearer every moment. A strange picture they made to the Lieutenant's eye—that crowd of men without officers! Close upon two hundred bronzed faces were turned toward their leader, some in the full sunlight, others cut across by the shadow of the sails.

Henderson sprang to a gun-carriage and stood looking down upon them. He seemed to dominate the whole scene, his eyes burned, his mouth was hard and grim, harsh lines appeared on his face. Even Kennedy felt a strange thrill of the nerves as he looked at this mutineer, and the men stared at him as though under a spell.

"Mates," shouted the sailor in a loud, strident voice, "you see those two ships? One's a British merchantman, and the other's a French frigate in chase of her. Now, mates, you remember Captain Bradstone. He was a brute and a tyrant. I killed him. I'd kill him again. But if Captain Bradstone stood here in my place, what would he do?"

There was silence for some few moments. Then a deep voice shouted from somewhere in the crowd:

"He'd fight that Frenchman, I reckon."

"Ay, would he!" cried Henderson. He stretched out a long arm and pointed over the bulwarks. The men watched him open-mouthed. "I rose against him," the sailor went on, "but I didn't rise against my country. I'm true to her. I'll serve her now, if you'll help me. I can't make speeches, messmates, but here's us, mutineers if you like, and there's a merchantman, maybe with women aboard, and there's a Frenchman after her. What do you say, then? Will you fight that frigate like men, or will you sail away like cowards?"

Just for a moment the result hung in doubt. Then, with a great tumult of cheers, all those rough, simple-hearted men were surging round their leader, shouting and wringing his hand!

Henderson turned to the Lieutenant.

"You see, sir?" he said proudly. "We'll do it, if you'll help us."

"On my soul I will!" cried the young officer, carried away by the scene. "I ask nothing better."

"Thank you, sir," said the other. He turned swiftly to the men, giving them no time for their enthusiasm to subside. "Quarters, lads!" he cried. "Clear the ship for action!"

In a few moments the preparations were in full swing. There was some little confusion at first, but Henderson and the Lieutenant plunged into the middle of the laboring men, and order was speedily restored. Just as the *Indomptable* fired her first gun the *Adventurer* was ready. The last touch of all was given when active fellows swarmed up to the trucks and nailed three great ensigns to the masts with the butts of their pistols. A signal was made for the *Cumberland* to stand clear and escape while the corvette engaged her enemy.

"Mr. Kennedy," said Henderson, "you'll command up here and have the handling of the ship. I'll take charge of the gun-deck.

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I'll fight the ship, sir, if you'll sail her."

Kennedy bowed formally, as he might have done to his superior officer.

"Very good," he said quickly.

The other held out his hand before going below.

"Will you take it, sir?" he asked. "We may not see each other alive again."

The Lieutenant gripped it as a second gun thundered from the *Indomptable*.

"Good-by, Henderson," he said. "If you come through this alive, I'm your friend, and I'll speak for you!"

The sailor rushed down to the main deck. Very quiet and spacious it seemed, with the guns run out on both sides, the men clustering round them, the planking clear of all obstructions save the powder-boxes and shot-racks.

"Now, mates," said Henderson, "there's only one thing more I want to say. There's going to be no surrender while I live. We fight this gun-deck while one of us can move a finger!"

A deep murmur of applause greeted the words.

He began to walk up and down along the line of guns, pausing every now and then to stare through a port to where the big Frenchman was rapidly closing the range.

Above decks Lieutenant Kennedy was standing by the helmsman, his eyes alight and eager, a little spot of color on either cheek. Very few men were on deck; only the marines squatted by the bulwarks, their muskets leveled. But below, the Lieutenant knew, scores of men were standing ready. How would it all end, he wondered? How would this officerless ship come through it? It was odds, in any case. Twenty-four guns to forty-four; four hundred men to under two hundred—and the Frenchmen had officers to lead them. The Lieutenant smiled as he caught himself thinking: "Yes, but we have got Henderson."

Suddenly he bent forward and snapped out a sudden order to the steersman. The guns thundered out beneath his feet, red flashes broke from the Frenchman's side and a score of balls flew screaming overhead. The action had begun.

It was a type of many another fought in those seas for the past two hundred years. The ships maneuvered round each other, wheeling and circling like hawks. Two things the Lieutenant knew he had to do. He must prevent the Frenchman from boarding, and he must, as far as possible, prevent him from bringing the whole of his powerful broadside to bear.

It was Kennedy's first experience of command, but he displayed that day those qualities which were afterward to make him known as one of the best seamen in the navy. Time after time the *Indomptable* tried to close, or tried to come broadside to broadside, and time after time the *Adventurer* evaded her. Great banks of white smoke enveloped both vessels, and between decks it was like a London fog. Down there below Henderson was everywhere at once, storming up and down the guns, helping to run them out with his own hands, cheering on the faint-hearted. The men stood to it beyond all expectation; there was no shrinking, no slackening; only the firing was a little slower and more ragged than usual.

Ten minutes had elapsed; the corvette had had all the best of it, when, under cover of a great mass of smoke, the French Captain at last threw his ship close alongside. The *Adventurer* drew slowly ahead, but, while she was doing so, the *Indomptable* poured in three terrible broadsides. Kennedy clenched his teeth as he heard the rending and riving of wood and the shrieks of stricken men.

Slowly the ships surged along, so close that their yards were almost touching. Then, as the *Adventurer* at last drew clear, a great chorus of shouts came from the French frigate's decks; a sudden tongue of flame curled up her mizzenmast, and in a moment her sails were in a blaze. Almost before the lieutenant understood what had happened, she was on fire and burning furiously.

Kennedy stared with parted lips for a few moments, then flung himself upon the wheel and edged the corvette away. The remnants of the *Adventurer's* crew came pouring up from below, and watched the sudden fate which had overtaken their enemy.

"They'll never get it under," said Henderson hoarsely, passing a hand over his powder-blackened face.

The Lieutenant shook his head.

"Never!" he repeated. "Can't we save some— Ah, look there; look at her now!"

A profound, dull roar came from the *Indomptable*, and her whole great hull seemed to erupt and fling itself into the air in flaming fragments. An immense volume of

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smoke soared up and spread out like a gigantic mushroom. When it cleared there was no longer any French frigate, only a charred mass, rocking idly upon the water.

"Her magazine's exploded!" exclaimed Henderson.

IV

THE Lieutenant gazed upon the scene, overwhelmed and horrified, and no sound came from the *Adventurer's* deck. Then Henderson moistened his lips.

"Well, sir," he said slowly, "there's the end of a good ship. I doubt if any of them are alive, and, anyway, we haven't a boat left which will float."

Kennedy nodded silently. The sailor turned to his own men again.

"Now, mates," he said, "you've all done—" He stopped suddenly, with his eyes starting from his head. "It's our turn now!" he roared. "By the Lord! It's our turn now!"

The Lieutenant whipped round. Some large fragments of burning canvas had been blown from the French ship on to the *Adventurer's* forecastle. With a terrible speed the flames had seized hold of the littered deck, curled round loose rope-ends, flickered up the foremast. The fresh breeze fanned them, and, as the men rushed forward, the whole fore part of the corvette burst into flames!

Henderson gave a wild laugh.

"After all," he cried, with a terrible gaiety, "we sha'n't live to be hanged as mutineers!"

Even as he spoke the fire caught the foremast, and the great sails whiffed into flames.

"Man, don't talk like that!" said Kennedy frantically. "Bear a hand, for God's sake, some of you!"

There was no time to attempt to man the pumps, but the exhausted seamen formed into line and passed buckets from hand to hand. It was useless; the flames gained with giant strides; they might as well have played upon them with squirts.

"It's no good, sir," said Henderson gently; "we may as well stop trying."

The seventy or eighty men left alive retreated to the quarter-deck in silence. A strange picture they made in the glare of the fire, all powder-blackened, blood-stained and weary. Kennedy stared round wildly, and suddenly his face lit up at what he saw.

"There's the *Cumberland*, lads!" he shouted. "See, she's coming back!"

Henderson looked astern to where the Indiaman was standing toward them under all sail. Captain Davies had seen the destruction of the French ship and was returning to rescue his own rescuers.

"I see her," said the sailor. "Well, she can't reach us in time. We'll have blown up long before she's down on us."

"But we can swim for it, man!" Kennedy cried. "Some of us, at all events, may be saved."

Henderson stared at him fixedly.

"Maybe," he said almost fiercely; "but I'll never find a better place to die than this —here on my own quarter-deck, commanding my own ship!"

"But the men, Henderson, the men!" screamed the Lieutenant frantically.

The sailor turned toward them, his face ablaze.

"If there's any of you want to swim for it, now's your time!" he shouted. "But I'm staying here!"

It was strange how, down to the last, his dominion still held. A few of the seamen looked astern at the *Cumberland*, but not a man moved!

Kennedy felt his eyes fill with sudden tears.

"Then I stay here as well," he said quickly, "to die with the rest of you!"

The sailor shook his head angrily. "Not you, sir," he said; "we kept you by force; you're not one of us."

"I stay here," repeated the young officer, though as he spoke he saw the *Cumberland* lowering her boats, and the hot breath of the fire seemed to scorch his face.

Henderson looked at the merchantman, and gave a sudden smile.

"We'll set you free the same way as we took you," he said. "Now, mates!"

Before the Lieutenant could understand, strong hands gripped him, swung him on to the bulwarks and fairly hurled him into the sea! Dazed and half conscious, he saw the water rushing up toward him, he was engulfed, and then found himself on the surface again, striking out vigorously. The burning *Adventurer* drifted away very swiftly, but before him, as he rose upon the waves, he saw a black speck, which was the *Cumberland's* foremost boat.

How long it was before he reached it he

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never knew, but even as the rowers leaned over and pulled him aboard, the corvette's end came. Across the sea an immense fountain, a great, glorious cone of fire, rose up toward the zenith, and the dull crash of the explosion came down with the wind.

Kennedy hid his face in his hands, and the rowers urged their boat on with furious speed. Long before they could reach the spot the shattered fragments of the *Adventurer* had sunk. A few charred pieces of wreckage, a few dead and disfigured bodies, were floating about on the troubled sea, and though the boats searched long they found nothing else.

The crew of the *Adventurer* had gone with their ship, gone with their leader. So they died—mutineers and heroes!

Princess Peaches-and-Cream

by John A. Heffernan

WHEN the great American breakfast-food concern concluded to invade the British market it was first of all agreed that its valued advertising expert, Mr. Jacob G. Buchmuller, should make a reconnaissance in force. The plan was to prepare for the advance of the selling division with the thunder of cannon.

Ammunition was not to be spared; the main movement was to take place under cover of the thick smoke of burning money. This was strongly urged by Mr. Harold Armitage whose education had been completed abroad.

"The glittering front," said he impressively, "has just as much carrying power in Europe as it has here. If we are going to have a struggle between American breakfast-food and English breakfast tea, American breakfast-food must dress, talk, eat and sleep like a bubbling fount of clear and unadulterated cash."

Consequently Mr. Buchmuller traveled over the bounding billows in the state-room *de luxe* of the *Lusitania*, convulsively clasping his diaphragm at every bound. His friends had told him the sea voyage would do him good, and—but why pun? It was really a sad thing. The magnificence of his

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quarters did not comfort him, and the only time he dared look at the menu-card it gibbered and mocked at him. His first happy heart-throb was when he was told that a few hours more would land him at Southampton, where billows cease from bounding and propeller blades and digestive organs from revolving.

The feel of the solid ground under his feet brought back Jake's self-confidence, however; his eyes grew bright again and his cheeks took on the hue of life. Train motion was something he was accustomed to, and he was quite in his usual health and mood when he hailed a taxicab at Charing Cross and directed the chauffeur to drive to the Cecil. While the porters took charge of his luggage he approached the onyx oval behind which lounged a statuesque young man with pale, chiseled features and calm blue eyes over which blue-veined lids lay languidly. Without lifting his glance the young man swung a huge register round and extended a silver-handled pen in his perfectly manicured fingers. The pen was taken from his hand and wriggled rapidly across the open page, leaving in its wake the flaunting signature:

"Jacob G. Buchmuller, New York."

The clerk reversed the book and glanced at the entry, touching a silver push-button with a gracefully extended finger at the same time.

"U. S. A.?" he said inquiringly, nodding at the entry to indicate that it was not complete.

"Kid," answered Jake, leaning over the counter and talking with great earnestness, "New York is all of the U. S. A., except the fringe. If there's any other burgh that spells itself New York, it's sporting an alias. Get me?"

The blue-veined lids were raised and the pale Adonis gazed full at the new guest. Then his eyes brightened and a slight flush tinted his marble cheeks.

"Yes, your Majesty," he said, bowing low.

"Oof!" ejaculated Jake. "Why, Reginald, I never should have thought it of you! Tally one in the first frame for the caste of Vere de Vere!"

The clerk looked somewhat perplexed.

"My name is Henry, your Majesty," he volunteered.

Jake stared at him.

"Listen, kid," he said, for there was a stir of interest in the well-dressed throng in the lobby, and a warm spot at the back of the American's neck made him feel that observation was there focused. "Listen! The correct form of address is Mister. Get it? M-i-s-t-e-r, *Mister!*"

"Certainly, your—mister," replied the clerk, now quite rosy with confusion.

"H'm! That's better," Jake approved. "And now, where's Front? I want to get to my room and swash."

"The attendant is at your side, sir," said the clerk. Jake surrendered his hand-bag to Buttons, who led him through a labyrinth of corridors to the ornate door of a lift. "That was a frappé young person," he thought, as the gilded cage softly ascended. "I wonder where he got that majesty dope?"

Irritation gave way to surprise, however, when the attendant threw open the door of his suite, revealing the gorgeous scene within.

"Oi-yoi!" he gasped, "but this is some luxurious! Pretty flossy for the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipoten-twenty-thirty of Armitage, Barnes & Curley to the Court of St. Jim, eh what?"

HE STEPPED into the room and looked round him; at flashing mirrors and glittering crystal candelabra, gossamer draperies of softest silk and curtained openings that led into connected apartments even more splendid. At the door of the sleeping-room he paused, abashed as a man might be who had unwittingly invaded the boudoir of a princess. Very gently he bent down and, opening the bag that had been deposited beside the dressing-table, inserted his hand.

"Hennything you desire, your Majesty?" came a treble from the doorway; and Buttons, who was agile, if plump, ducked just in time to escape a silver-backed military brush that Jake had hurled at him.

As the door closed behind his precipitately retiring figure, Jake squatted on the floor, grumbling:

"Is this a hotel, or a funny-house for millionaire ginks with twisted tops? What are they pushing that 'your Majesty' thing at me for? The next little jester that tries it will get his countenance concaved, if they send me to the Tower and chop off my nut for it. I wonder which of these padded cells is the bathroom."

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Very softly the tinkle of a silver bell sounded, and Jake jumped up, startled. The bell tinkled again.

"Oh!" said Jake, a light breaking on him. "Come in!"

The door opened and a very stiff person in red plush entered the room. His body bent forward from the hip joints, then straightened with a snap and locked, upright.

"Gee!" Jake exclaimed. "Do that again and I'll tip you a dollar—a crown, I mean!"

The man solemnly repeated the performance and Jake threw himself into a chair and cackled.

"Fine!" he applauded. "Do you know any more tricks?"

His visitor seemed at a loss for reply. He stood woodenly in the center of the room, his eyes fixed on Mr. Buchmuller.

"Well," Jake said at last, "get it out of your system, bo! What do you want?"

"Yes," said the tall person in red, "I'm your man, your Maj——"

But Jake grabbed him by the throat and broke the word off in the middle.

"Don't do it!" he warned. "If you finish it, I'll finish you! You just call me 'sir,' or 'Mister,' or 'Hello Mike,' or anything else that may occur to you, but quit that majesty kidding. It's beginning to irritate me."

The frightened servitor gulped a few breaths and then said meekly, "Yes, sir."

"Now be good!" Jake warned him as he resumed his seat. "Just tell me what you're doing here and make it short, because I want to dive into a tub. Speak it!"

"Yes, sir. The management, sir, hit sent me hup, has usual, sir, to wite on you, sir; hand hif you please, sir, H'I'll 'elp you, sir, get ready to bawth, sir."

"You'll what?" yelled Jake, sitting up straight.

The red plush person retreated two steps.

"No hoffense, sir. H'I'm just your man, sir. May H'I harrange your 'abiliments, sir?"

Jake leveled his finger at the door.

"Blow!" he commanded. "Fade! Skiddoo! And tell your management I'll harrange my own 'abil-what-you-said. Boo! Boo-oo-oo!"

The red plush person backed hurriedly out the door, and Jake got up and locked it after him. A cold dip and a good cigar smoothed his ruffled temper, and he felt, with considerable satisfaction, the stirrings of an appetite that had not been active of late. As he opened his door to go down he found three uniformed functionaries waiting in the hall.

"The first man that says it I'll shoot," he declared quite firmly.

"Do you desire, sir," asked the man nearest him, "to have dinner served in your suite or in the dining-room?"

"Oh, I'll go down," answered Jake.

The interrogator turned on his heel and stepped in front of the other two. Then he lifted his finger like a drum-major signalling for the band to strike up.

"This way, sir," he directed; then, turning, paced with impressive stateliness the wide corridor, his two associates falling in abreast at his heels and Jake bringing up the rear. The lift was waiting and it wafted them gently down to the dining floor where they disembarked and the escort again fell in.

Thus ceremoniously was Jake led into the brilliantly lighted banquet hall with its flare of white napery, its flash of crystal and silver, and its gay, laughter-shot murmur of many voices. He found himself at last at a table at the extreme end of the room. Here the commander of his bodyguard held his chair while the other two arranged themselves one at each side of the table and bowed gravely and profoundly as Jake seated himself.

The proceeding had attracted considerable attention, there had been a pause in conversation as the party entered the room, a rustle and stir in the brilliant throng, and many a curious glance directed toward the table at which the head waiter and two assistants now hovered over Jake like three guardian angels with mutton-chop whiskers.

JAKE, having given his order, turned to survey the other diners with no little interest. It was a sight worthy his regard, the gowns and jewels the women wore, and their animated faces and flashing eyes gave joy and life to the picture; even among the men there was that air and expression of people with whom the world went well.

Jake nodded his approval.

"Pretty good—for London," he commented under his breath.

But even as he looked, a strange thing happened. From a distant door a girl en-

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tered. There was a dark shadow behind her, but the American did not notice it; his eyes were all for the slender, splendid young woman whose lustrous raven hair swept in thick, silken undulation back from her low, broad brow. The dazzling brilliancy of her complexion made him gasp; spell-bound he gazed at her, noting the long lashes shading eyes in whose misty depths shone all the starlight of an August night, the tender curves of cheek and chin and sloping throat, the rich warm glow under the creamy skin, the gleam of primrose shoulders and arms, and the lithe grace of the swaying figure in its draperies of shimmering corn-gold and splintered silver.

To his amazement the girl came directly to his table, and he half rose as she stopped before him and, clutching the skirt of her gown in an exquisite hand, sank on one knee and bent her queenly head. A low, liquid, but to Jake quite unintelligible, murmur flowed from her lips.

Jake glanced over her head, looking for some explanation of this unexpected and mystifying incident, and then noticed for the first time an olive-skinned man in evening attire who had followed the girl in and who now stood behind her with his head bent. The stranger uttered a few words, but Jake interrupted him.

"Say it in English, friend!" he beseeched. "And please say it quick. What's the performance about?"

A look of surprise gleamed in the stranger's dark eyes, but he answered quietly and in English:

"Your Majesty will forgive my sister's impulsiveness. She has just come from the convent, and she is aflame with loyalty. It is a girl's pure and fresh enthusiasm, sire. You will forgive?"

"Sure, Michael, if it will ease up the pain any," Jake answered. "But you're in the wrong pew. And—can't the young lady get up? I'm a married man, and it looks like the—well, if Celia should hear about it I'd have some explaining to do."

The girl slowly stood up and looked at Jake with perplexed eyes.

"I have done wrong?" she said. "Oh, pardon me! You weel pardon me, your Majesty?"

"Well, I guess yes!" said Jake graciously. "Now, if you and Mr. ——"

"Pontabarrio," supplied the stranger. "Your Majesty, may I present my sister, the Donna Marie Eulallie Pontabarrio."

"Delighted!" said Jake, rising and bowing. "Now please sit down here and tell me what all this means. I'm from Missouri, and I do want some one to show me."

"Hee says hee ees from Mee-soo-ree!" murmured the Donna Marie, a quick, golden smile parting her rose-petal lips.

"Your Majesty——" began Mr. Pontabarrio.

"Oh, scissors! Cut it out!" pleaded Jake. "My name is Buchmuller, and they call me Mister back home. Please say Mister!"

"Ooo!" exclaimed Donna Marie, clapping her hands. "I see. The eenco'neeto!"

"I give it up," declared Jake, shaking his head. "I'm whatever you want to call me. But besides that I'm just a plain, ordinary three-for-a-quarter young person from New York, over here to open the British mind on the subject of 'Frazzled Friskies, the king of breakfast-foods.' And now, if you would like a bite, sit down and let me order. Oh you *garçon*, with the auburn ear-warmers! Set two more places here!"

Jake found his dinner quite delightful. The girl was beautiful to look upon, and her voice when she spoke, which was not frequently, was full of thrilling music. Her brother, who addressed Jake as "Mister Bookmooler" with almost painful precision, was well-informed and witty. As the meal progressed Jake noticed a queer, quizzical gleam in the man's eye, and at its conclusion, as the three stood up, Pontabarrio said:

"Farewell, Mister Bookmooler! My sister and I have to thank you for a very pleasant hour indeed. I shall try to meet you again sir, and—perhaps I can relieve the perplexity under which it is plain you labor."

"You're the candy kid, if you do," Jake said, "for it's beginning to make me feel queer in the turret-chamber. Au-revoir, Miss Pontabarrio. So long, Duke!"

PONDERING deeply, Jake went back to his rooms and donned a hat and overcoat. On his way to the street he stopped at the cigar-stand and purchased a cigar. At the door he buttoned his overcoat around his throat and lighted the cigar. Then he stepped forth into the glare of nocturnal London.

The busy, brilliant street, the boisterous well-dressed throngs, the hurrying vehicles, the chur of motors; all these were as a whiff

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of home to the lover of New York. Certain peculiarities of tone and inflection in the high-pitched street-cries were strange in his ears, and these interested him. Under the light of a street lamp at a corner he paused and stood for a minute or two, looking about him.

Suddenly a soft churring at his side made him start and he turned to find a big automobile at the curb, from the brown-and-crystal limousine of which a tall, handsome boy was stepping.

The young fellow stood before Buchmuller with his head bent.

"Your——" he began, but Jake stopped him with an upraised finger.

"Mister!" he said.

"Mister," repeated the young man.

"Buchmuller!" said Jake.

"Buchmuller," parroted the stranger.

"Now say it!" Jake commanded with pedagogical air.

"Oh, sir," the lad burst forth, "Donna Marie, she had the honor of dining with you this evening. I was there and I saw, sir. Oh, sir, if only you would say a word to her in my behalf she would listen and obey. I know she would. I have never been at court, but my house is noble, sir. I am Francesco Albarro de Duorolac; my uncle serves your—yes, sir—served you in the royal guard, sir. I have begged him to speak to you, but he says 'go to the devil,' he has 'more important matters to worry about now.' Oh! he is a tough old soldier, sir, he does not know what love is. But we are all loyal, and so is Marie—loyal to the very, very core of her golden heart, sire—but her brother, the crafty Count Silvio, despite his good blood is inclined, as you know, sire, to the Republicans——"

"Down with him!" declared Jake. "Hurray for Tammany Hall!"

The lad paused, a look of mystification in his frank and likable face, but he got his second breath when Jake smiled encouragingly and went on:

"Therefore he discourages our courtship, fearing it would compromise his miserable fortunes with the rebels; and Marie, she says it would be improper to marry against his will unless her King tells her to do so. She could not disobey her King, sire, and then she would snap her fingers at the crafty Silvio, just like that, sire. Please help me, sir."

"Well," said Jake, "that's some job you propose, kid, but you look like a good boy to me, and, having seen the maiden, I excuse your impetuosity. She's a peach. When do you want to get married."

"Now!" cried Francesco, passionately smiting his breast and doing steps upon the pavement.

"Easy with the whip!" said Jake, as he stooped and picked up the silk hat the young man's ardor had shaken from his brow. "Here's you lid. Put it on, and for the love of Mike be reasonable. This fairy prince stuff is all to the mustard as far as it goes, but I left my wonder-wand in the umbrella-stand, kid. I'll say a good word for you if I get a chance, but I have some doubt as to whether or not I shall ever see your sweet Marie again.

"But yes," insisted Francesco. "She is here, sire! She is with me! She has come 'herself!"

"Lemon and seltzer for yours!" said Jake. "You're all alone, old sport!"

"Hee ees from Mee-soo-ree, Francesco *mio;* you weel have to show heem!" trilled a flute-like voice from the dark interior of the limousine.

"Oi-yoi!" ejaculated Jake. "It's just like that, eh what? Well, if you want to do it, do it! Bless you, my children! Go to it!"

Francesco dove back into the limousine, the door slammed behind him, and the car shot away from the curb. From the window in the rear there floated back to Jake over the roar of the street traffic, a sweet and happy:

"G-oo-oo-d night!"

"There are some respects," Mr. Buchmuller thoughtfully observed to himself, as he retraced his steps to the hotel, "in which being a king has it on ordinary commercial life."

And he went to sleep chuckling, and dreamed he was the reigning monarch of Hoboken, N. J., and the office boy lighted a fire under his throne which burned a large and embarrassing hole in his ermine robe. Not knowing whether it was the thing in royal society to wear plebeian pants under the splendor of the outer garments, Jake was in great distress of mind, for a royal ball was in progress and he didn't dare get up and lead the grand march with the Princess Peaches-and-Cream. From this delicate situation he extricated himself by waking up.

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II

IT WAS a most unromantic morning. Although the gilt hands on the marble face of Jake's bedroom clock indicated the eighth hour, the gray perspective beyond the window curtains seemed to contradict the very respectable time-piece. Jake slid out of bed and walked to the window to look out upon the roofs of London. He didn't see any; an impenetrable mist enshrouded them. So he went and took his bath and dressed, and looked at his mail which had been sent up from the office.

It was all properly and sanely addressed to Jacob G. Buchmuller, Hotel Cecil, London—a letter from Harold Armitage and one from Celia bearing the familiar American postage stamps, and three from British business houses to whom Jake had wired from Southampton, stamped with the head of His British Majesty. With these in his hand he went down to breakfast. In the dining-room there were not many persons, and these seemed intent on their own affairs; there was nothing to remind Jake of his remarkable adventures of the preceding evening. He ate a simple breakfast, had a taxi summoned, and set forth on the day's work. It did not take him long to find his selected advertising agent, and the program he mapped out for that conservative Briton made the latter gasp.

"Old top, it's no bally use, you know," declared that gentleman—a Mr. Wilfred Alexander—as he jingled his watch-charm and puffed out his ruddy and astonishingly elastic cheeks. "It's never been done, old top."

"Time to begin," said Jake, who was extracting a roll of paper from his bag.

"And you really think, old fellow, that in so short a time you're going to get the public here to eat the bally stuff?"

"Eat it? We can make 'em sing it, if we get our ads going right! Watch them, sport; they'll be wearing it at Court next season."

"Oh, I say, now," protested Mr. Alexander, "it isn't a fabric, you know! It's an edible commodity, as I understand it."

"Gee!" said Jake, staring at him with undisguised admiration. "That is sure one forty-horse-power understanding you have. Yes, old Thicker-than-water, it's sure something to eat. That's why I think people are going to eat it. A long experience has convinced me that people generally eat things-to-eat. But first they've got to be shown that it isn't something to patch roofs with, and our job just now is to show them. Now here is a poster with which I propose to bill this tight little island till it looks like a board fence on a railroad line. You see that happy, pink old person? Makes you just love him—that joyous grin, eh what? And here is the text, 'Frazzled Friskies Fattened Father.' Pretty good; chess?"

"Ripping!" declared Mr. Alexander, but his enthusiasm was so obviously artificial that Jake looked up at him. "Er—" muttered Mr. Alexander in some confusion, "who is 'Father?'"

Jake dropped the poster and stared at him.

"I wonder—" he began slowly; but Mr. Alexander was never to know what he wondered, for Jake, instead of completing his sentence, grabbed a blue pencil and scribbled across the head of the poster, "This Fat Fellow is Father."

"Oh, that's better!" exclaimed the Briton, his face brightening. "Leaves no doubt as to the meaning, you know."

"Yes, I know — now," said Jake. "You're helping me lots, old top. Now as to position: Do you think we could get this painted artistically on the dome of St. Paul's?"

Mr. Alexander's eyes opened in wide horror.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed.

"No?" Jake shook his head sadly. "How about Westminster Abbey—any space we could get there?"

"Oh, say, you're spiffing!" declared Mr. Alexander.

"I'm what?" demanded Jake.

"Spiffing—chaffing me, you know."

"That's a nice word, that spiffing," said Jake. "Yes, sport, I was kidding, but get busy with your thinker on the serious stuff. I'm going to come across with half a million of real American dollars for advertising in this blessed kingdom of yours, and I want value—and that is no music hall merriment, believe me. I don't know the people here, and you ought to know them. How are we going to soak it in?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander, his face luminous with sudden inspiration. "I'll introduce you to Charlie Moray."

"Who is Charles?" Jake asked.

"A regular righto, old top!" responded

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Mr. Alexander with enthusiasm. "I'll get him on the telephone and make an engagement for luncheon at the club. He's a press-man, you know, and a real tip-topper."

"Get him," said Jake.

Mr. Alexander spent a few minutes at the telephone and returned to announce that Mr. Moray would meet them at one o'clock.

"That," said Jake, looking at his watch, "will give me time to drop in at the bank, and call on Ballington, Brice, Turner & Tripe, the dry-groceries concern. I'll be back here at twelve-forty-five."

HE WAS punctual to the second, and Alexander escorted them to the club where they met the "ripping" Mr. Moray. That gentleman turned out to be a Lancashire product with a Byronic brow and a humorous blue eye, and Jake, who at the introduction swept one keen glance over him, decided that his looks gave promise.

Moray on his side took to Jake at once, and they had not begun their excellent meal before he was asking permission to make notes of the American's "forms of expression." Warmed by his eager interest, Jake enthusiastically set forth his hope of a spectacular charge upon and quick capture of the British appetite.

"I can understand," he concluded, "that a big winner in advertising might bring 'em to their feet in America, but leave 'em cold here. Human nature is the same everywhere—not. Now on the other side, I'm all right——"

"You're all right on both sides," chimed in Moray, "and I'll be glad to help you, lad. Wait—I have an idea now! If the chap I need is in London, and needs the money, by Jove we'll introduce you with a whooper!"

"Who? What?" cried Jake eagerly, but Moray shook his head. "Patience!" he said, smiling. "My scheme depends on the truth of a rumor we heard in the office this morning. If all goes right, we may be able to tie your advertising up with a newspaper article that will attract much public attention. That's what you want, eh? Meanwhile, I'll put you up here while you are in London. To-night let us take in a show. Is it all right?"

"It is, and thanks!" Jake responded cordially. "But Alexander and I must be getting a little work done this afternoon. I want a page in every London newspaper to-morrow morning, and a double page on Sunday. Besides that, Alexander has to get me up a schedule of the papers in other cities and let me know when we shall have to have copy ready for the magazines. Till this evening, then!"

So they parted, and Jake proceeded to give Mr. Alexander the afternoon of his life. It left that gentleman gasping.

"Gracious, old chap!" he exclaimed, as he paused at five to clear a space on his desk for the tea service. "You are such a nervous people, Buchmuller. Don't you ever stop to catch your breath?"

But Jake was watching with great interest the manner in which Mr. Alexander manipulated the little china vessel above the delicate cups.

"My word, Wilfred!" he declared at last, "you do pour tea nicely. Right in the cup, every time!"

Mr. Alexander suspended operations long enough to bestow a surprised glance upon his visitor.

"Why, of course," he replied. "That is where it should be poured, you know."

WHEN they met Moray at the theater the Lancashire man greeted them with a wide smile.

"Don't ask me any questions, old fellow!" he forestalled Jake, who was plainly in the interrogative mood. "Wait till to-morrow; I want to give you a little surprise."

The musical comedy sang and danced itself to the intermission and, as the curtain went down and the lights up, Jake took advantage of the high light to look around the house. He started as his glance fell on a box opposite, and a flashing smile on a beautiful face informed him that he had been seen and recognized.

"Well!" commented Moray with a grin. "You haven't been losing time, Buchmuller. Who is the fair lady?"

"Eh?" said Jake. "Oh, the peach in the box. She is—let me see—oh, yes, she's the Donna Marie You're-a-la-la Pontabarrio. I think she's a little dippy, and she thinks I'm a king."

For some reason this simple explanation struck Moray as so extremely amusing that he burst into a loud and ringing peal of laughter that attracted numerous curious glances.

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"Hey there! Soft pedal, old sport!" pleaded Jake. "They'll be putting us out if you cackle like that again. What did you do—lay an egg?"

But Moray, who had scaled his mirth down to a pianissimo, only shook his head and gazed with his humorous eyes at the perplexed American.

"It's too good to tell, old top," he murmured. "To-morrow you will know."

III

THEY had a little supper after the performance, with some newspaper friends of Moray's. It was so thoroughly a good supper and a gay one that when Jake awoke in the morning he wondered if he had left directions to have the newspapers sent up to his rooms. As a matter of fact, he had; leaning over the counter he had said to the sleepy night-clerk: "Say, Ice! I want you to send up to my room in the morning all the papers there are. If any is missing I'll have your head cut off and hung on the castle gate. Get me, kid?"

And the newspapers were there; a great heap of them, through which Jake began to wade as soon as he had bathed his brow with a cold, moist towel and ordered a "good morning." He remarked the big advertisements of "Frazzled Friskies," made a note on his pad of the names of the publications, and then telephoned down to the office that he wanted a chop and a pot of coffee sent up to him. When the table had been spread in his sitting-room he sat down and arranged a newspaper against the sugar bowl so that he might read the news while eating. Then he lifted his coffee cup. But the cup was arrested in its ascent; like Mohammed's coffin, it went neither up nor down but hung in suspense, while Jake stared with bulging eyes at the printed page in front of him. His glance had been taken prisoner by the very conspicuous headline:

EXILED ROYALTY SELLS FRAZZLED FRISKIES

Slowly Jake put the cup down at last and, rising, stepped to the bathroom. Drawing aside the rubber curtains of the shower he inserted his head and turned on the cold water. He dried his drenched head, walked back to the table, drank a cup of black coffee and poured another. Then he looked again at the newspaper. The headline stared back at him. Like a man in a dream he read the first paragraph. This is what it said:

PRINCESS PEACHES-AND-CREAM

A most remarkable situation has interested the patrons and employees of the Hotel Cecil for the last few days. King Alberic of Roumaria, before the late revolution deprived him of his throne, frequently put up at the Cecil. He maintained on those occasions but the slightest incognito, and his prodigality with tips and genial manners made him very well known to the management and staff.

A fortnight since apartments in the hotel were engaged by cable from New York for a Mr. Jacob G. Buchmuller, a representative of the manufacturers of the well-known American breakfast-food, "Frazzled Friskies," and the arrival of that American traveler was expected when, to the surprise of the hotel people, King Alberic appeared and registered as Mr. Jacob G. Buchmuller of New York.

His Majesty has seemed in a most remarkable mood. He is said to have acted in a most eccentric manner toward the valet who was sent to attend him, and to other servants who were formerly favorites with him; and even with the employees of the hotel who know him so well he preserves the strictest incognito, quite vehemently insisting that he is in reality Mr. Buchmuller, notwithstanding the fact that he took dinner on the very evening of his arrival in the public dining-room with Count Silvio Pontabarrio of the Roumarian Embassy and the latter's sister, the beautiful Donna Marie Eulallie Pontabarrio.

It was enough. Jake dropped the newspaper and jumped to the telephone. Soon he heard Moray's gay laugh ringing over the wire.

"But say, old man!" Jake protested quite seriously, "this is no giggly thing, believe me. It may be some joke, but if it is I'm the goat. What are you trying to do to me, anyhow?"

"Hold on to your crown, old top!" encouraged Moray from the other end. "Count Silvio has just rung off, and what *he* said—my word! But he gave me a lead for the afternoon editions, and really it's a deuced good story, old fellow. You have tied up matters for that turbulent little state in a most astonishing way, you really have, you know. Just keep a stiff upper lip and look out for the evening editions. See you at dinner!"

Jake laid the receiver down and stood thoughtfully scratching his head.

"That young man," he said to himself, "is lost over here. He ought to be back home in one real live town, he ought. I

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wonder what he's going to do next! However——"

The sentence ended in a sigh. He ordered another pot of coffee and another chop, and altogether made a fairly reasonable breakfast. He was still at the table when his bell tinkled and a servant took advantage of his permission to enter.

"Cable dispatch, sir," the boy said.

Jake took it from him, ripped open the envelope and read:

Afternoon papers here quote London press, effect you have king working for you. Bully! Think could get Kaiser?

HAROLD ARMITAGE.

"Oi-yoi!" Jake gurgled, "it's got home already."

"And, sir," said the boy, presenting a silver platter quite covered with cards, "these gentlemen desire to see you."

Jake picked up one of the cards and read the inscription thereon:

Herbert O'Brien O'Reilley
Evening Star, London.

Then he examined the others. Each of them bore the name of a newspaper representative, among them were the cards of correspondents of New York papers.

"Send 'em up!" he directed.

"All of them, sir?" asked the lad.

"Sure," said Jake.

Within a few minutes a score of eager, interrogative gentlemen assembled in his drawing-room.

"Believe me, gentlemen, this is some pleasurable, even if unexpected," said Jake, bowing before them.

"Nothing doing on the Roumarian thing there!" declared a New York correspondent immediately. "That's the pure prattle of the Shining Sluice, or I'll eat it!"

"Oh, joy!" cried Jake, turning on him with delighted eyes. "It sure sounds good, brother, to hear such homelike language."

"But what does it mean?" asked a London journalist with his notebook in his hand. "Are you not King Alberic?"

"Yes, I am—not!" declared Mr. Buchmuller with great positiveness. "And I'd like to hand it to the gink that spread the glad tidings, believe me! Ever since I hit this tent, the inmates have been plum dippy. That piece of ice down at the desk started it."

"But they really think you are the King, you know," insisted the London man.

"That's what I said—they're dippy!" responded Jake.

"Look here, bo," asked the New York man suspiciously, "this isn't any press-agent frame-up, is it?"

"On the level it isn't," Jake earnestly assured him.

"I desire," exclaimed a voice in the corridor, "to wait upon Mister Bookmooler."

"Wait a second, boys!" said Jake, addressing the newspaper men. "That's the Pontabarrio fellow that had dinner with me and he promised to relieve my perplexity. Let's have him in and see if he can straighten this out."

He raised his voice and cried:

"Let that gentleman in!"

THE door opened and Silvio Pontabarrio entered. There was no pleasant smile on his lips at all, and the glitter in his black eyes was ominous. Indeed, he was so angry that he quite overlooked the reporters and strode straight up to Buchmuller.

"Now," said he quite calmly, but with a voice cold and edged like a stiletto, "will you explain, sir, why you married my sister?"

"Hellup!" cried Jake, throwing up his hands and sinking into a chair.

"Hey? What's this?" came a chorus of quick voices, and Pontabarrio started and swung round on his eager questioners.

"Ah!" he said, drawing in his breath. "I failed to take notice when I came in. You gentlemen are——"

"Press-men," they explained. "Has this gentleman married Miss Pontabarrio?"

Count Silvio bit his lip; then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been most imprudent," he said. "This is, you will understand, a matter it does not please me to publicly discuss. But I can not leave you with the impression my words might carry. He did not personally marry my sister, no, but he gave his consent—command, she construed it to be—to her marriage with Francesco Albarra. For purely private reasons, which do not reflect, I assure you, upon Francesco Albarra, the marriage at this time was—well, inconvenient. It is all I can say to you, gentlemen—you will permit me to retire until the visit I so unhappily interrupted is at an end."

He bowed very gracefully and stepped

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into the hall, but the inquisitorial band trooped out after him, only the New York correspondent lingering.

"Say; on the level, can you tell me anything?" he asked.

"On the level, I can't," Jake answered him, and he too went.

"Phew!" exclaimed Mr. Buchmuller, wiping his brow.

But he was not long to enjoy peace undisturbed. Buttons presented the card of Sir Vincent Pentworth, and a minute later Sir Vincent presented himself, a slender, military-looking gentleman with iron-gray hair and side-whiskers.

"I am from the Foreign Office of his British Majesty, sir," said Sir Vincent, seating himself in the chair toward which Jake had waved his hand. "The Government is interested, if your Majesty will pardon me, in your Majesty's purposes here."

"Now wait one minute!" Jake broke in. "I'm not any King of Roumaria."

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed Sir Vincent, adjusting his glasses and examining Jake, "so you're not! I have had the honor of meeting his Majesty, personally. But, my dear sir, there is a most remarkable facial resemblance, *most* remarkable!"

"What!" cried Jake. "Do I look like this wop king?"

"Wop?" said Sir Vincent, creasing his brows. "Wop? I do not quite understand, but you really strikingly resemble the ex-King of Roumaria. Yes, indeed; in a most remarkable degree, sir, *most* remarkable!"

"*Good* night!" groaned Jake.

"Eh?" said Sir Vincent.

"I mean 'My Word!'" said Jake, "or 'Bah Jove!' or something."

Sir Vincent arose.

"You'll pardon the intrusion?" he said, a little stiffly.

"Sure!" said Jake. "Won't you have a little something before you go?"

"No, no, I really think not," said Sir Vincent. "I must report to the Office. It's very remarkable. Good day, sir!"

The baronet retired, and Jake walked to the mirror and looked at the reflection of his own dark, keen countenance.

"I think they're all kidding me, but I'd like to take a slant at this gazebo," he muttered, as he turned away. "Hello, Duke!" he saluted Count Silvio, whose slender figure was framed in the doorway. "Back again?"

"Now, sir," the Count said, "why did you tell my sister to marry?"

"Oh, prunes!" said Jake wearily, as he walked to a small table and with one leg thrown over it faced his visitor. "You knew at dinner the other night that I wasn't any cast-off king. Why didn't *you* put the young lady wise?"

"Ah, true, I knew!" Pontabarrio admitted. "But Marie was looking for Alberic—who is really in London—in order that she might gain his consent, and thus obtain a pretext for disobeying me, and—well, when I saw that she continued, even after you spoke, to think you were the King, I hoped she might be cured of some romantic notions not unnatural to her age and inexperience."

"Well then, what are you handing it to me for?" Jake asked indignantly. "Now look here, Duke," he continued, shaking his finger at the Roumarian, "why not be a good sport? You planned to put one over on the little lady, and she beat you to it. Why not spring the 'Bless you!' thing, and let the kids be happy? What's the tariff question got to do with love's young dream, anyhow?"

Count Silvio looked at Jake intently and a slight smile quivered on his lips.

"Oh, well," he said with a shrug of resignation, "I suppose there's nothing else to do, now. But, my dear fellow, quite obviously you do not understand the necessity I now labor under of making certain explanations to the—er—present Government. You see Albarra is here with his uncle, General Count Pedro O'Donel, an extremely violent partisan of the late régime, and the General is suspected of plotting here some very serious mischief to the Government of which I am an official representative. You must see how frightfully it complicates matters."

"Oh, Gee!" exclaimed Jake, "is it like that? I'm sorry, Duke, on the level, if I've got you in Dutch with the administration, but just the same I think the Donna Marie would have pulled it off all by her little lonie, even if I hadn't butted in."

"Perhaps," assented Silvio, smiling again, if rather ruefully. "I pray you will pardon me for having disturbed you—it really was my own fault. I have the honor to bid you good day."

"Ta-ta!" said Jake, shaking the hand he extended.

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THE evening editions fully justified Moray's vague but enthusiastic forewarning. The romance of the Donna Marie and the strange case of mistaken identity connected with it served beautifully to advertise "The King of Breakfast-Foods." The virtues of that delectable matutinal dainty were entwined by Moray's skilful pen with the royal arms of Roumaria and the politics of the new Republican Government. Jake chuckled in spite of himself when at dinner he joined Alexander, who was dumb with wonder, and the Lancashire journalist, who was bubbling over with joy.

"I got the idea," Moray explained, "from the report we had in the office of your Majesty's presence in town, and when I went down to the Cecil in the afternoon I found a situation most perfectly fitted to our purpose, old chap. That is all there was to it, lad. And now, what show for to-night? We ought to celebrate."

"Excuse me!" demurred Jake. "I have had some exciting day, and to-night I'm going to turn in long before the merry milkman sings his morning lay, believe me. I'm going to punch the pillow with my crownless conk. To-morrow I'm yours truly, but this evening I hit the hay."

So Moray and Alexander reluctantly parted with him at the door of his hotel, and he marched up to the desk to ask for his mail. As he approached it he observed a stranger bound evidently for the same objective. The clerk looked up.

"Your Maj—" he began, addressing Jake, but paused as his glance fell upon the stranger.

"Say it to him!" directed Jake. "I abdicate."

The other man turned his head, and at the sight of his keen dark countenance Jake's mind went back instantly to the reflection of his own face in the glass. For a second their eyes held each other's; those of the American jauntily self-confident and humorous, those of the royal Roumarian proud and coldly resentful. Without a word the latter stepped away, and as Jake turned with frank interest to look, he saw a stiff person in red plush and three functionaries in uniform fall in and precede the unfortunate prince down the marble corridor. A very low laugh tinkled behind him, and he swung on his heel and faced the glowing Donna Marie.

"Well, Miss Pontabarrio—" he said.

"Madame Albarra," she corrected.

"Madame Albarra," he went on, with a slight flush on his face, "I hope I haven't got you in wrong with—" he nodded his head toward the vanishing procession. "I didn't mean to play it low down on you. If it has done you any harm, I'm sorry I let you think I was a king."

She leaned forward with girlish impulsiveness and looked into his eyes.

"Oh, you Keeng Bookmooler, who are from Mee-soo-ree, must you always be shown?" she asked, her white teeth gleaming between the parted rose-petals. "I knew you would not say to me no, when I saw your face. What deed I want a keeng for, but for heem to say what you deed say?" Her liquid laugh rippled out gayly as she saw understanding dawn in Jake's eyes. "The keeng who says what I weesh heem to say, hee ees keeng een my heart, ah yes! Farewell, Keeng Bookmooler! I shall not soon forget you. Are you steel from Mee-soo-ree?"

She extended her hand.

Quite as gallantly as any courtier, Mr. Jacob G. Buchmuller of New York, U. S. A., bent his head over it and kissed the white fingers.

"So you tossed one across on the Duke!" he said. "You're a little wonder, Princess Peaches-and-Cream!"

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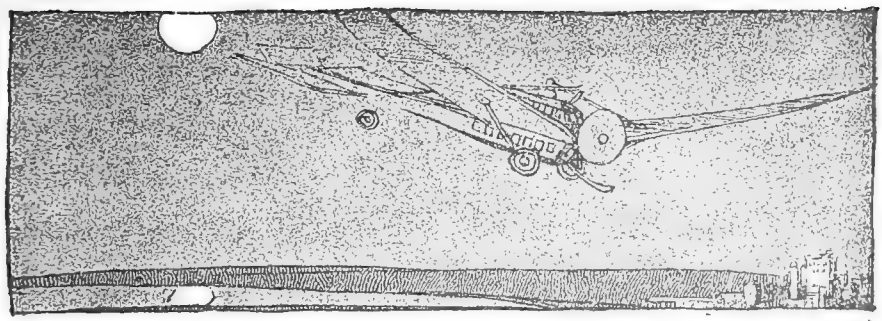

The Adventure of the Skyscraper

by Robert E. Andrews

ON THE edge of the table in the elegant offices of the Halcyon Bible Society perched the utterly unscriptural figure of Hazlitt Gatchell. His stout, quick-moving form was clad in flannel and his tanned face wore its perpetual half-smile.

There was no smile on the saturnine features of his *vis-à-vis*, Jim Carstairs; he lay back with half-closed eyes and amused himself by blowing pipe-smoke across the warm sunset light, which turned the blue cloud to a curious brown. The rubber soles and flannels of the two young men were curiously out of place in an office-building at the close of day. Presently a third man, of a rough artisan type, entered from an inner room.

Gatchell turned to him.

"Everything O.K., Murray?"

"Not a drill missing," answered Murray, producing a blackened clay bowl and making himself comfortable in a chair.

"Fine! Now just listen to this, Jim," Gatchell resumed, reading from a clipping:

"It is interesting to suppose that some of the great, epoch-making inventions of history had been evolved by the minds of men who, instead of giving their discoveries to mankind for a price or otherwise, preferred to utilize them as long as possible purely for their own unscrupulous purposes. Suppose Fulton had elected to turn pirate—what frigate could have overtaken the smoking devil-ship? Suppose an arch-conspirator of the Camorra had discovered the Maxim silencer—what uncanny assassinations would have shocked the world and baffled its police? Suppose a working submarine had first been built by some predatory enemy to mankind—what unexplained and mysterious catastrophes might not have befallen treasure-ships in lonely, shallow seas? Fortunately the great inventions have fallen to honest minds, unless those men could be called dishonest who to-day buy up or hold a patent with no intent to use. To protect their established industries and to discourage other improvements, such men deny to the world the fruits of inventive genius. If not dishonest under the law, they are at least criminally selfish."

Gatchell laid aside the clipping.

"Why," he said, "Hart might actually have written that himself!"

Carstairs nodded.

"Robert Fulton would have met less difficulties than ours in the absence of telegraphs. But that stuff is largely twaddle, if you want my opinion."

Ignoring the criticism, Gatchell laughed excitedly.

"Oh, we have got it over all of them as to thrills! To-night I'm Captain Kidd, Raffles, and a Tammany contractor rolled into one. There's plenty of old romance left in the world if you pay the price. But doesn't that article hit Hart! The man has his invention. 'Fine,' say the patent lawyers, 'but you would be infringing on So-and-so's basic patent. Sell out to him!' Faugh! *There's* something to reform. Let the tariff alone; it's obsolete nowadays, eh, Jim?"

The two men laughed at some common recollection. Murray was leaning forward, his heavy face serious.

"Gents," he said, "I come into this game from the outside a week ago. I'm strong for the boss and this game of his, but say, what's he in it for? He ain't no yegg! According to your remarks, Mr. Gatchell, he dopes out this world-beating machine of

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his, and then the patent sharps tells him—"

"They tell him he can't manufacture that machine to sell, can't even use it himself without paying a royalty to those fellows who won the basic patent. Hart knew his machine was a world-beater. He was entirely disgusted by the —— patent law and with some other things, so he decided to cut loose and show the world what he could do—law or no law. He took his money and his drawings and disappeared."

THIS synopsis of motives was a little sketchy for Murray. He frowned.

"Ain't he in it for the swag?"

Carstairs, with a significant glance at Gatchell, forestalled that young man's reply. He knew the vital importance of securing Murray's faith in their common enterprise and in Hart.

"Do you think for an instant, Murray," he asked quizzically, "that Hart would risk a twenty-year trip to the rock-pile for the simple fun of it? No, sir! But there's all kinds of swag. The papers we're after are the plans and working drawings of this machine of Hart's—the only plans remaining out of his possession. The Patent Office has none because they refused his claim. These patent lawyers, though, were impressed with Hart's scheme and we learned that, like the double-dealers they are, they'd had copies made before returning the original set.

"Now our Canadian adventure, which has put the police after us, prevents ordinary measures to force the return of these copies. The only way to secure them is to dynamite the vaults of this building. That's what we're here for, and the plans are our swag, Murray. It's plain business and if Gatchell gets a little pleasurable excitement out of our adventures, what's that to a couple of old-timers like you and me?"

"Business is business," grinned Murray, "but I may say this job comes near being a lark."

"'Twill be amusing," agreed Carstairs, "but it will mean quick and united action. If they spot your handiwork, Murray, Frisco Harry will turn lobster green when he sees the papers to-morrow night."

Murray's laughter rang with a heartiness unseemly in quarters supposedly devoted to Scriptural research. It might be supposed that the present inmates of the Halcyon Bible Society's offices were gross intruders. On the contrary, the plausible Gatchell a week before had rented these same offices as the city headquarters of "a Bible society, sir, that will shortly be known from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

"You'll be a good ad for us, then," remarked the agent.

"We shall indeed," agreed Gatchell smiling.

He examined the agent's plan with interest. The upper nine floors of the Saltover Building formed a rectangular tower looming far above the surrounding structures. The modest skyscraper district of the New England city lay half a mile to the north. The building was served by four elevators and in a rear corner the usual little iron stairway zig-zagged patiently skyward. The offices of Heath & Horowitz, Patent Attorneys, were on the top floor. Gatchell thanked the agent and departed.

That had been a week before. For the last four evenings Carstairs, Gatchell and Murray had met in the Bible Society's offices, waited until ten o'clock, and departed singly and with circumspection. To-night they felt that their waiting was not to be in vain. Gatchell strode impatiently to the window and apostrophized the ant-like stream of dinner-seekers, eighteen floors below.

"You'd stay and watch—office-boys and capitalists and stenographers! You'd stay if you knew what's coming! You'd never even think of dinner. Why, to-morrow you'll stand down there and gape by thousands!"

"You infant, Gatch!" muttered Carstairs, and leaped to his feet.

Gatchell spun around from the window. Some one was fitting a key to the outer door.

J. Patrick Hart, who a moment later stood in the room, had no apparent claim to the obvious deference paid him by the much more impressive Carstairs and the much more energetic Gatchell. His tall, loose-jointed frame culminated in a small, almost feminine head. Beneath a mild blue eye, delicate nose and dreamer's mouth jutted an incongruous chin. Over these features there lay unmistakable lines of disappointment, even of bitterness, but a contradictory gleam of humor constantly flickered in the gentle eyes. Hart was now frankly smiling at the impatience of the three men —Gatchell's open, Murray's also eager, and

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Carstairs' only visible in the steady gaze of his cold, half-shut eyes.

"To-morrow—" began Hart, and at the word Gatchell made a gesture of disappointment, "to-morrow the Halcyon Bible Society will leap from obscurity to such a fame as has never been enjoyed by a similar organization."

"Ah-ha!" cried Gatchell in enthusiastic relief.

"And now, gentlemen," continued Hart's curiously mild voice, "I suggest that said Society enters upon executive session for the discussion of final details." His tone changed. "Carstairs here, please. Turn on the light, Gatchell. Murray, you have everything ready? Good, then sit down. That's it. Now——"

AT NINE-THIRTY the watchman on his final round noted the light in the Halcyon offices, but an hour later he was dozing comfortably in his little closet on the ground floor. The departing elevator-boy, who hesitated upon an impulse to yell "Fire!" into his somnolent superior's ear, fled as two belated clerks clattered down-stairs.

At just the moment when the elevator-boy left his car, Buster Murray, expert mechanic, stepped out upon the iron grating that surrounded the big pulleys at the head of the elevator shafts. He paused, a ghostly figure in the gloom, and peered down the dim, dizzy vista of the well. He heard the elevator-boy and the clerks depart, then all was silent. A splash of yellow light shone across the shaft at the ground floor and glinted on the wire cables.

"Give us the glim," growled Murray, and was instantly flooded by a brilliant beam of clear white light from a powerful acetylene lantern, held by Carstairs on the floor below.

Almost noiselessly the big Irishman fell to work, his rapid movements throwing grotesque and inky shadows upon the roof above him as he pried and pulled and screwed at the big wheels and the shining, snake-like cables that ran up and over them.

Down the hall, dimly lighted by an occasional bulb, Hart and Gatchell were busy. They had brought a bucket of paste and a large square of burlap from the Bible Society office and had carried them to the neighboring door marked "Heath & Horowitz." Over the ground glass they smeared the paste thickly. The burlap was then firmly and carefully applied and the blanketed pane left to dry.

Carstairs, keeping the beam of his lantern upon Murray as he moved from one set of pulleys to another, saw him suddenly straighten up from the last set with a grunt of satisfaction.

The four men met at the foot of the ladder.

"'Tis up to you now to hold the bulls," said the Irishman to Carstairs, wiping the sweat from his brow with a grimy paw.

"You're sure of your job?" questioned Carstairs. "If a party of bluecoats should arrive up here in one of those cars it would land me in the chair and all of us in the pen for ten years, you know."

"They're fixed all right," asserted Murray. "Now for the real business!"

The four men walked down the hall to where the vault for the use of the eighteenth-story offices presented its smooth, impenetrable surface to the white glare of the acetylene. The Saltover Building housed the leading attorneys of the city and its vaults were sturdily made. Murray rapped the chrome steel in several places with a small drill and tried the heavy T-handle. The others awaited his words with interest, but Murray only hunched his shoulders and knit his brows.

"Dynamite," he said and Hart nodded, consulting his watch.

"You've ninety-five minutes," stated Hart. "Now you'd better get at the office, boys."

According to arrangements, planned in every detail, Gatchell was to work with Murray in searching for the plans. First they were to break into Heath & Horowitz's offices, and drill and charge their safe, so that if the papers were not found in the vaults there need be no delay. With Carstairs, the two set about their task, while Hart climbed the scuttle-stairway to the roof.

THE young men watched with interest as the Irishman's practised hand broke away the glass behind the cloth with only a gritting sound in the process. It would not have disturbed a sleeper in the next room. A moment later the whole piece of fabric was lifted carefully away, coated on the inside with broken fragments of glass.

Some wicked, tooth-like bits remained

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in the frame. Those upon the bottom edge Murray worked loose and laid down. Then he dived ponderously through the opening. He landed silently and a moment later the unlatched door swung open. Carstairs carried in the tool-bag and watched Murray crouch before the safe. His deft attack was worth following, but Carstairs could not stay. In five minutes he went out to the hall and encountered Gatchell, who squeezed him gaily by the arm.

"The boss is up on the roof looking at the starlight," he announced. "Said it was a pity to break up the night's peace with a lot of fuss—what d'you think of that?"

"Oh, well, he's a poet, you know, Gatch," replied Carstairs. "No one but a poet could have conceived this game."

Gatchell slapped his leg.

"——, this'll be fun, Jim!" he exclaimed.

"Naturally, and I believe I have the lion's share of sport. I'll be getting in position, now, Gatch. We can't have any stray prowler wandering up here now. Hullo, here's Murray. On your job, boy! See you on the roof anon!"

"Luck to you, you modern Horatius," grinned Gatchell turning away.

In his cheerful way he was as much of a help as was Murray with his skilled cracksman's fingers, or Carstairs, who could kiss the queen of hearts full on the lips at twenty yards with a wicked, leaden kiss of forty-five caliber.

Murray was now drilling into the big, steel vault door. Above, on the flat, gray, starlit expanse of the roof, unbroken but for a scuttle and a group of pipes in one corner, J. Patrick Hart, his plans made and his men at their posts, smoked a meditative pipe, a tall, motionless, almost Napoleonic figure.

At the head of the topmost flight of the little iron stairway Carstairs relighted the acetylene lantern. Turning the beam out over the descending flight, the modern Horatius surveyed his stronghold. The slate steps, but four feet in length, went downward to a narrow landing against the rear wall of the building. The lower half of the flight, ending upon the floor below, descended parallel to the upper half in the opposite direction. A man lying behind the bars of the railing on the upper floor would thus command, directly below him, the backs of those ascending.

After some moments' study of the situation Carstairs carried some light chairs from the offices of the Halcyon Bible Society and wedged them tight across the landing in a *chevaux de frise* which, if not impregnable, would at least delay for some moments a body of men attempting to rush the stairway.

On the hall floor, behind the railing overlooking the landing, he placed several books in a miniature breastwork, and beside them laid a box of revolver cartridges. Two wicked automatics were examined and approved. It was eleven-twenty when this young Horatius sat down to await patiently the onslaught of the Etruscans.

For forty minutes no sound came from the building. Only an occasional *clink* and muffled word or two indicated that Murray and Gatchell were patiently drilling away at the vault down the hallway. For forty minutes Hart stood bareheaded and motionless in the starlight. With his pipe cold between his sensitive lips, the inventor gazed out over the city that had mocked his failure as a business man, that had jeered at him as an inventor, and that sheltered the girl who had laughed at him as a lover.

Absorbed in melancholy as he was, Hart's eyes were turned with a purpose to the silvery haze that blurred the western horizon.

Suddenly a near-by chime boomed the first note of midnight. Almost simultaneously far in the west a pin-prick of silver light glowed in the sky like a bursting star —and was gone. Half a hundred bells far and near took up the melodious refrain and the still night air pulsed with the music. Hart knocked the ashes from his pipe and peered eagerly into the distance. On the ground floor the watchman turned uneasily in his niche and settled himself to drowse more comfortably. But on the top floor all was action.

As the clocks struck, Gatchell and Murray stood near the vault door, to which led two slender wires. The Irishman's oily thumb pressed an electric button as the sound of the chime came faintly to them. With a deafening detonation the great steel box spat off its massive door, which clanged and thundered on the marble flags. Into the whirling dust the two men dashed. Before them in the murk rose the tiers of steel boxes in one of which, guarded by a heavy combination lock, lay Hart's drawings.

The Irishman bent over the tool-bag.

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"There's nothin' to it but blowing 'em open one by one," he said. "Ain't no objection to that, is there, now we've started 'em up?"

"No," said Gatchell, "but——"

"It's sure the quickest way. To jimmy the bunch'd take all night. Here, you watch me drill the first one, then you can get busy."

And once again the two men set to work.

AT THE explosion, Carstairs started, rose to his feet, and peered, waiting, down the center well of the stairway. After a moment he heard the clatter of heavy boots upon the tiling of the entrance-hall.

"Hi you—wake up! Wake up!" shouted Patrolman Conroy, shaking the drowsy watchman by the shoulder.

Dazed by the concussion that had rocked the building, the man swore stupidly.

"In God's name what's doing up-stairs?" asked Conroy fiercely.

"Up-stairs, ye say——"

Conroy spat disgustedly.

"Sounds to me like some one's cracking a safe while you're snoring!" he snorted. "Here, can you run an elevator?" The watchman, gradually wakening, nodded. "Well, get a move on and shunt a car up here double-quick, see!" He propelled the man emphatically toward the basement stairs. "Hey, another thing—turn on all your lights, all over the building! Understand?"

Then Conroy rushed outside to rap on the concrete for assistance, in case patrolmen on near-by beats should take the explosion for an innocent blast.

Three minutes later he and two puffing comrades surveyed the watchman fumbling vainly with the controller in a car at the bottom of the shaft. The elevator seemed to try to move but, after a half-hearted jump, there came a *ping* and a grating sound from far above. Simultaneously the wire cables slackened and hung useless, evidently thrown from their pulleys at the shaft-head. The other elevators were tried with the same futile result.

"That settles it," grunted Conroy grimly. "There's dirty work here. If there's yeggs working up there, they must be loony—that's all! They're sewed up tight. Tim, you go out——"

Another lesser concussion shook the building and echoed through its empty corridors. Murray's drill had found the steel boxes thin. The startled group of police listened in silence until the last reverberating echo rumbled away.

Then Conroy exclaimed,

"For the love of heaven, what's doing? This here's a case for the reserves. You, Tim, beat it and ring 'em out. Ah," he cried as two more bluecoats came running across the hall, "here's Kerrigan and McNulty! Safe-cracking up-stairs!" he explained curtly. "You two get on the roofs adjoining this place. Smash in a window if you must, but get up there quick, see? Heffernan and Smithy and me'll go up after these birds, and we can't have 'em sneaking off over the skylights. Beat it! Come on, boys."

Conroy saw a sergeant's stripes in the night's work. With his two comrades close behind, he trotted up the first flight of stairs, jaw set, gun in hand.

The second-story hall shone white, scrubbed, and entirely orderly in the glare of the electrics. So did the one above. At the fourth Conroy paused. Before he could speak, a third detonation crashed down from above.

"'Tis my belief that comes from 'way up, eh, boys?" questioned Conroy.

Heffernan, a lanky, fire-eating Kerry man, swore an assent with a fierce wave of his gun.

"The top it is!" agreed Smith and the three officers plodded doggedly up the stairs, curious but unafraid.

MANY minutes had elapsed from the stroke of midnight ere Hart's intent scrutiny of the western sky was rewarded. Abruptly, far above the roof-tops of the city, the silvery mists half a mile away seemed to coalesce and suddenly form a broad, flat aeroplane.

The starlight glinting from its metallic upper surface indicated that the apparition was no wraith. Below the wing surface the night-mists swirled through a complex network of rods and bars, among which crouched a human figure. To Hart's ears came the purr of a four-cylinder engine running in perfect adjustment and he nodded his satisfaction.

The queer, flattish monoplane swerved, evidently as its operator recognized the outlines of the Saltover Building. A partially

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broadside view of the machine revealed its huge proportions and the fact that it was jointed transversely across the middle. The under sides of the plane showed a slight boat-like curve, and the whole fabric rode the air with a peculiar, buoyant stability that no air-ship designer but Hart has ever attained.

The inventor watched his creation swing around toward the roof. So absorbed was he that not a start moved him when the second explosion shuddered the roof beneath his feet. The purr of the motor suddenly ceased. Without a sound the huge flyer floated swiftly down toward the Saltover Building—nearer and nearer, until the tense figure in the driver's seat flashed close above the cornice. Then back wrenched his shoulders, like an oarsman's as his blade catches the water, and, as if by magic, the great plane above him buckled crosswise in the middle, folding into what looked from the side like a narrow V.

Instantly the machine dropped to the roof with a hideous shriek of metal runners upon roofing and the sharp creaking of straining rods. The wall-like surface of the fore-plane, raised against the air, stopped the flyer with miraculous abruptness. Amid a shower of sparks it came to rest almost in the middle of the roof.

Hart ran forward to meet the rotund little figure that climbed from the driver's seat, fumbling in its balloon-like suit for a cigarette.

"Upon my soul, René," exclaimed the inventor with enthusiasm, "I believe you could land on a ten-cent piece! That was splendid, old man, splendid!"

He reached out for the swarthy Frenchman's hand and wrung it warmly.

"Pouf," René answered, around his cigarette, with a superb indifference. "It was nothing. A little wind and perhaps, who knows——"

He indicated the ghostly abyss that lay around their lofty isolation, but his smile suggested, despite his words, that the result would have been quite as perfect in a hurricane.

Hart stepped over a piece of delicate aluminum truss-work and examined the motor.

"She did her part well," he murmured, half aloud.

"She runs like a dream to-night," answered René. "I make the trip just as you plan—you see, one hour and thirty-seven minutes from the farm." He referred to a little chatelaine watch pinned to his suit. "A big fire in Hartford, m'sieu. I feel the heat four, five hundred feet up, and to help those poor firemen I spit three times, for luck. What—*mon Dieu!*"

He started violently as the third explosion sounded beneath their feet.

The shock brought Hart back to the business in hand.

"Lower your wings, René, and have everything ready for a quick start at any minute. Hello, there's Gatchell now!"

"*Bon soir*, René!" called Gatchell from the scuttle. "How do you like our little celebration? Beats the Fourteenth of July, eh?"

René grinned over his shoulder as he bent by the levers of the aeroplane. A moment later the great wings settled slowly to their horizontal position, ready for flight.

Gatchell was making his report to Hart.

"Fifty-four boxes—chrome steel," he said. "We'll have every one blown open in two hours—I'm drilling while Murray does the priming. Of course, the explosions raise the devil with the papers, but we can identify almost everything. We'll surely be able to pick out a big package of plans."

"No matter if they're charred," replied Hart. "Simply bring along the remains. With any luck you ought to strike them in an hour. That's fine, Gatch! We'll hold the fort."

Gatchell hurried down again. Faintly from the street below the sound of gongs echoed up to the roof.

"The devil!" Hart muttered, and ran to the cornice.

Throwing himself face down, he cautiously extended his head out over the dim depths. Four hundred feet below the street lights glistened upon the roofs of three patrol wagons and the stream of nickel-tipped helmets that was pouring from them into the building. Hart grunted his relief.

"Not the firemen, yet——"

SOMETHING whined by his head and a second later there floated up the report of a revolver. Hart mentally complimented the marksman, but retained his position, studying to determine whence the shot came. He finally made out a little group of men on the roof of the building opposite and far beneath. Two spits of flame and two more reports followed, but

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Hart could not even hear the bullets. He wriggled back and rose to his feet.

"I wonder how Carstairs is getting along?"

As if in answer to his thought, there came the faint and muffled report of a revolver from within the building.

Patrolmen Conroy, Heffernan and Smith were climbing the stairway to the seventeenth floor when they were halted momentarily by a calm voice from above.

"Below there!" said Carstairs. "We give you this warning——"

"Warning——!" shouted Conroy. "Come on, boys!"

The three men raced around to the foot of the final flight.

They noted the business-like barricade on the landing and simultaneously heard two revolver-shots ring out. Twin bullet scars appeared in the wainscoting of the stairway. One of the bullets ricochetted, buzzing, close over their heads. The officers came to a sudden halt.

Invisible above them, Carstairs continued:

"You see we mean business. Come on at your own risk and be shot in the back before you even reach the landing. Try going up backward and you may get a flying shot at the tops of our heads before we nail you. Either way, what's to gain?"

"There's no hurry. We'll just wait for the reserves."

Scarcely had this decision been reached when up the stairway floated the voice of Lieutenant Cassidy heading the reserve force from the station.

"Hello, Conroy!"

"Hulloo!" bellowed Conroy. "Seventeenth floor, lieutenant. Take your time—we've got 'em!"

But the rapidity with which Cassidy and his men reached the seventeenth floor indicated beyond doubt that they had *not* "taken their time." At a significant sign from Conroy Cassidy whispered his news to the three waiting policemen.

"A flying-machine on the roof!" Conroy would have doubted his superior's seriousness but for the look on Cassidy's face. "How in ——?"

"A couple of bums seen it come and——"

A panting reporter pushed forward:

"Moreover, we've had five calls from the suburbs about it—people heard or saw it! Oh, it's up there, right enough," he chortled gleefully. What a story this would be!

"There ain't no doubt at all," said Cassidy. "Now, what's this ye say, Conroy?"

He listened with grim lips to the story of the unseen defenders and the ominous revolver-shots from the floor above.

When the report was finished,

"Hey there—up above!" called the lieutenant.

"Well?" inquired a curiously mild voice, a voice entirely strange to Conroy.

"'Tis the other, the second man," whispered that officer eagerly. "He's not spoken before."

Cassidy scowled and checked the bullying roar on his lips at the obviously gentle tones of the reply.

"I give ye five minutes," he finally announced. "There is twenty-four men here and in five minutes we come up—get that!"

Hart was standing smiling by the side of the prostrate and ready Carstairs.

"Oh, lieutenant, come now!" he replied to his invisible interlocutor. "Just look things over as a sensible man. Twenty-four or twenty-four thousand, you must come up two by two. For ten feet you'll be back to us and defenseless. Why, man, we could pump three shots into every one of you, if necessary! Order a charge if you must, but it'll be dirty butchery—nothing more!"

CASSIDY'S scowl concealed his feelings, but on the faces of his men there was no concealment of their belief that a charge would mean useless massacre. Only one man, big Heffernan, seemed to question the serious intent of the defenders. He laughed shortly as Hart's voice ceased.

"'Tis nothin' but some —— student! If Cassidy falls for their bluff it'll die with him," he muttered scornfully. "For two beers I'd rush the place alone."

Up above Hart whispered a moment to Carstairs and strode down the hall. The explosions continued their periodic thunder, but his presence was necessary on the roof.

Hart knew his position was precarious. Several pieces of fire apparatus glittered in the street. Hurrying figures bore scaling-ladders into the adjoining buildings. A red runabout proclaimed by its presence that the fire chief was on the scene. The chief of police also stood in the shadows below.

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Like a released Jack-in-the-box, Gatchell suddenly leaped up from the hatchway.

"Eureka!" he shouted and waved aloft a bundle of tattered papers.

Murray stumbled up behind, dragging his tool-kit.

A glance was enough to convince Hart that he held in his hand the only duplicate plans for the great aeroplane that lay beside him on the roof. He lit a match and a moment later the clear, green-edged, steady flame ate its way up the crumpled papers. His invention was his own again.

Hart broke the silence briskly.

"Now for home, boys," he said. "René, crank up your engine. Hold on there, Gatch—don't go down! Carstairs can hold them. We'll need you here. They're bringing scaling-ladders up to the roofs."

He left the shadow of the machine, studying the situation on all sides.

Gatchell and Murray stood watching René tug at his engine—once, twice, until at the third effort the motor burst with a splutter into that full-throated, drumming song which was to become famous. Hart stationed Gatchell and Murray at the sides of the building and ordered them to open harmless fire on the groups of figures that dotted the adjoining roofs.

"Drive 'em in!" he ordered, and the *crack!* of their weapons cut through the roar of the motor.

They were waiting now only for Carstairs, and Hart started toward the scuttle. Suddenly his right leg went absolutely numb from hip to toe. Half a mile away a whole floor of one of the big sky-scrapers, overtopping the Saltover Building, was brightly illuminated. A dozen men, resting their rifles upon the sills, were taking careful pot-shots at the figures on the Saltover roof.

"Gatchell! Murray!" he shouted, above the din of the waiting motor, and they carried him, crouching low, to the network which hung behind the driver's seat.

René, looking back over his shoulder, waited for the signal to throw in his clutch and be off.

ON THE seventeenth floor the group of baffled police remained inactive and murmuring. The chief had been sent for. Only Heffernan was openly dissatisfied at the check. Moment by moment the hot-headed Irishman's wrath and disgust increased.

"Why, 'tis nothing but some crazy prank—a bet, most likely!"

Heffernan was young and ambitious. He had expected to win promotion by being one of the three to capture these bold marauders. His wrath at the decision of Conroy was therefore augmented by disappointment at the arrival of the ingloriously large force of reserves. And then to have Cassidy—faugh!

Abruptly the tense stillness of the hallway was broken by a shout from the watchful lieutenant.

"Hi, grab him! Heffernan!"

But the warning shout came too late. In a bound the big patrolman reached the stairway, in another he was half-way to the landing, and that instant the sickening smash of a revolver bullet through his ribs taught Tim Heffernan that the game was in earnest after all.

Conroy caught the limp body as it crashed to the stair-foot. They tore off the bloody tunic while a dazed patrolman dashed for a helmetful of water. Three minutes later Heffernan opened his eyes. Cassidy was holding him now and bent close.

"Only one of them—just saw him—one man——him—but—got me—Ah——" There was no mistaking the final droop of the fiery red head against Cassidy's chest.

The lieutenant laid him down very gently. Then with a shout, leaped fiercely to his feet.

"One man!" he cried. "Come on, ye! More than one'll die for this night's work!"

Up they charged. Pair after pair of grimly ominous eyes swept the upper hall behind a leveled revolver barrel. The long corridor, still ceilinged with drifting dust, stretched before them—silent and deserted!

A minute later Cassidy, his men swarming behind him, stood on the empty starlit roof of the Saltover Building.

The officer turned his eyes just in time to see a glimmering, vulture-like shape disappear in the dim grayness, climbing, climbing, as it went. Cassidy turned and at his feet noticed a dark pool.

He nodded grimly:

"Tim, God rest you, there's more than one paid for this night's work!"

But J. Patrick Hart, bandaged and smiling as the inland air swept into his nostrils, was destined to undergo many another lawless adventure in the love of peril and the vain proving of his aeroplane.

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The Women Pirates of the Spanish Main

by Thaddeus S. Dayton

"NOW *we are to begin a History full of surprising Turns and Adventures; I mean that of* Mary Read *and* Anne Bonny, *alias* Bonn, *which were the true Names of these two Pyrates; the odd incidents of their Rambling Lives are such that some may be Tempted to Think the Whole Story is no better than a Novel or Romance; but since it is supported by Many Thousand Witnesses, I mean the People of Jamaica, who were Present at the Tryals and heard the Story of their Lives, upon the First Discovery of their Sex, the Truth of it can be no more Contested than that there were Such Men in the World as Roberts and Blackbeard.*"

So begins a dusty chronicle that has long lain neglected and forgotten by the world at large, "The History of English Pyrates," written by Captain Charles Johnson and printed in London in 1724. The days of the splendid outlaws, the kings of the highways and the high seas, were just drawing to a close when this quaint old book was issued.

Captain Teach, the famous Blackbeard, the invader of South Carolina, had been dead only five years. Roberts had gone to his account not long before. Sir Henry Morgan and Captain Kidd still lived in the memories of those who had known them in the heyday of their outlawry. The achievements of these and all the other famous sea-rovers were still fresh in the minds of men when this quaintly-typed old volume—with its "s's" like "f's"—appeared.

But the individual exploits of the great corsairs of those sonorous days of the Spanish Main grow pale beside the deeds of these two women buccaneers—the only ones in the world's history. In all the pirate crews there were no male ruffians who were braver, more bloodthirsty and absolutely fearless than these unique female freebooters, Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Their sex did not discommode them. They wore boots and breeches as gracefully and as easily as any man. They passed as men. They could shoot as straight or wield a cutlass as effectively as any of the sea wolves that ravaged the Caribbean.

One of the strangest pranks that Fate ever played brought them together in the same pirate ship. Side by side they fought under the black flag until the end of their roving careers. Only toward the last did each discover that the other was a woman. That came about through Anne Bonny's falling in love with Mary Read, whom she thought an exceptionally handsome and fascinating man.

The history of these two women soldiers

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of fortune, before they became pirates, is a romance by itself.

Anne Bonny's father was an Irish barrister; her mother a servant in the family. When Anne was in her teens, her mother being dead, her father emigrated to America and bought a plantation somewhere in the Carolinas. Anne might have married any of the planters in that region, for she had a substantial dowry assured her. But to all who came to woo she showed "a ferocious disposition," according to her biographer.

At last a penniless sailor appeared, won her heart, and they fled together to the Island of Providence where he hoped to find employment. He turned out to be a pirate who had forsaken his evil ways and had been pardoned by the British King. He was too colorless a companion for such a dashing and determined spirit as his wife, as it turned out, but they settled down to a humdrum life ashore, trading with the buccaneers who dropped anchor at Providence to spend their plunderings.

Anne Bonny never wore trousers until she went a-pirating. Mary Read, however, masqueraded as a boy and man from the time of her birth.

MARY READ—SOLDIER OF FLANDERS

MARY READ'S father was a sailor. One day he kissed his wife good-by and sailed out of London on a voyage to Spain. He never returned. Shortly after his departure Mary was born. Her maternal grandmother had promised that if the new baby were a boy she would provide for it handsomely. Therefore the mother kept Mary's true sex a secret and raised the child as a boy.

When Mary was thirteen her grandmother died, which straightway reduced her mother and herself to want. Thereupon Mary took service with a lady of quality as a footboy. Then her mother died. Mary, being young, strong and well-built "and having a taste for brigandage"—as her biographer puts it—tired of service and ran away to Flanders. There she enlisted in an infantry regiment. Although she fought with bravery in many battles, she did not win promotion; so she changed to a cavalry regiment. There was plenty of fighting, but Mary was not wounded and acquitted herself with much valor.

Her companion in arms was a young Fleming. Mary fell desperately in love with him, finally telling him who and what she was. In the end they were married, practically the entire army being present at the ceremony. Mary's happiness was short-lived, however, for her husband died soon afterward. It was not long before Mary, once more in man's attire, was in Holland, a foot-soldier on the frontier. Peace was declared, however, before she had participated in more than half a dozen skirmishes, and Mary, seeing no chance for further employment as a soldier, shipped as a sailor on a vessel bound for the West Indies.

BEFORE they reached their first port the ship was captured by pirates, and Mary Read, to save her life, cast her lot with them. Little is known of this brief interval of her history, but she finally landed at the Island of Providence and with the rest of the crew received full pardon for all her past actions. No one suspected that she was a woman. Her fellow pirates considered no one among them her superior in courage.

Thus Fate landed Anne Bonny and Mary Read on the Island of Providence almost simultaneously. Neither ever had heard of the other. Yet the web was being spun swiftly that was to bind them together for all time.

CAPTAIN RACKAM AND A STOLEN SLOOP

IT IS here that Captain Charles Vane passes across the stage and disappears as the prelude to the entrance of Captain Rackam. Vane was a dashing freebooter, the younger son of an ancient English house. On a certain voyage, Vane being in command, prizes were few and the crew grumbled. A pirate ship has ever been a rough republic that chooses swiftly its own rulers. The crew rose against Vane and deposed him, electing Quartermaster John Rackam Captain in his place. Under Rackam's leadership their luck turned. Many rich prizes came their way and Rackam's fame waxed mightily. Finally, surfeited with spoil, they put into the port of the Island of Providence to spend their gains. There Rackam met Anne Bonny, and she found in him her opportunity.

When Captain Rackam came ashore, flushed with victory and with his sea-chest filled with gold and jewels, Anne threw herself in his way and forthwith became in-

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fatuated with him. He responded fully to her passion. She urged him to set forth speedily on another and a greater expedition, but he tarried until he had spent all his money. His crew had been dispersed, and so he was forced to ship in a subordinate capacity.

"*He ingaged himself with Captain Burghess, lately a Pyrate, but pardoned, who had received a Commission to Privateer upon the Spaniards. This Cruize proved Successful; they took several Prizes, amongst the rest, two of Considerable Value, one loaden with Cocoa-Nut, and another with Sugar. They brought them into Providence, and found Purchasers amongst the Factors, who came from Other Places for that Purpose. The Dividend was Considerable, and as soon as Possible Disposed Of, Burghess sail'd out in quest of new Purchase; but Rackam, who having nothing but Anne Bonny in his Head, staid behind to spend his Money.*"

The success of her brave pirate chief excited Anne Bonny beyond all possible restraint. She realized, apparently, that with Captain Rackam at her side there were few prizes of piracy that could not be won. She proposed to her husband that Captain Rackam should buy her from him. Her husband refused to consider this. It was too much even for an ex-pirate living in a stronghold of the buccaneers. Ostensibly, at least, he had turned aside from piracy and considered himself highly respectable.

His attitude in the matter made a great stir on the Island and was the subject of much heated discussion among the sea-rovers and their women, some taking one side and some the other. Madame Bonny, however, quickly settled the question herself. She informed him that she was going to adopt piracy as her vocation and Captain Rackam as a partner. She was as good as her word.

"*To this Purpose,*" says the narrator of her misdeeds: "*she and Rackham plotted together to Seize a Sloop which then lay in the Harbour, and Rackam drew some Brisk young Fellows into the Conspiracy; they were of the number of Pyrates lately Pardoned, and, who, he knew, were Weary of Working on Shore and longed to be again at their Old Trade.*"

Of these "Brisk young Fellows" Mary Read was one. She knew little of either Anne Bonny or of Captain Rackam, but apparently considered the new venture promising.

Anne and Rackam plotted to seize a sloop lying in the harbor. Rackam enlisted several ex-pirates. Among them was Mary Read. The sloop, of thirty or forty tons and belonging to a certain John Haman, was considered an exceptionally speedy craft. Haman gained his livelihood by plundering Spanish sloops and launches.

Anne Bonny went aboard the sloop several times, pretending to visit John Haman on business. She found out that Haman slept ashore every night, leaving but two of his men to keep watch.

She came back and reported everything to Rackam. He, acquainting his eight associates with the facts, called a meeting at midnight. It being a dark, rainy night, they rowed out to the sloop. Anne Bonny, accompanied by one of the men and armed with a sword and a pistol, went immediately to the cabin where lay the two sailors. She threatened them with instant death if they made the least resistance or noise.

Captain Rackam meanwhile quietly cut the cable, hoisted sail and steered for the open sea. The sloop passed the Fort safely; it passed the guardship well down the harbor; soon it was out of danger. Anne Bonny, who had planned and executed it all, was now a full-fledged "pyrate."

THE CRUISE OF THE FEMALE PIRATES

THEY made for the Bury Islands, plundering all the sloops they met. From time to time they added new hands to the crew.

But there were many months of time and many moments of thrilling adventure between the night Anne Bonny hoisted the black flag and the day that she and Mary Read and the rest of them were laid by the heels at Port Royal. On one occasion, for instance, these two women pirates held the deck of their corsair alone against two-score enemies. The panic-stricken crew had fled below. Where Captain Rackam was is not disclosed. In disgust at the cowardice of her companions, Mary Read, after the assailants had been driven off, fired a pistol through the hatch, wounding one and killing another of the men who had quailed in the face of danger.

Once Mary Read and Captain Rackam were speaking together of the trade of pi-

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racy. He remarked that a pirate's was the worst of all professions; a life of continual danger with almost certain prospect of being captured and hanged in the end. She responded that men of courage should not fear death; that if pirates were not so punished a crowd of poltroons, robbers of widows and orphans, would overrun the seas and no gentleman of spirit could make a living.

Though Anne Bonny wore boots and trousers every one knew that she was a woman. On the other hand, no one suspected that Mary Read was not a man. They had not been long afloat before Anne Bonny turned her back on Rackam and began making desperate love to Read, in whom she believed she saw her beau ideal of a pirate chief. So fiercely did Anne's passion burn and so bold was she in declaring it that Mary Read was forced, in self-defense, to reveal to her that she also was a woman.

"Gadzooks!" cried Madame Bonny—and a great deal more of blood-curdling oaths and laughter, "So you're a woman, too! Blast us! We'll take the whole West Indies and every dirty prize on the coast! What good are these chicken-hearted men? Ha! Ha!"

Captain Rackam's jealousy was excited to such an extent that he threatened to cut both their throats. In order to prevent this sad dénouement Anne let him into the secret also, praying him not to reveal it. He kept his word, and the truth did not come out until long afterward at Port Royal.

Not long after this Mary Read herself fell in love. In the course of their business these pirates captured a large number of vessels belonging to Jamaica and other parts of the West Indies as well as tall ships voyaging to England. Whenever they found among their prisoners an artisan or some person who might be a useful addition to their crew they spared his life and forced him to join them, willy-nilly. Among these there chanced to be a young man who took Mary Read's heart by storm, though he did not know it. She decided first to win his affection as a friend, and they became inseparable companions.

In the course of their piratical wanderings—Rackam now had quite a fleet—they anchored off some nameless isle for water and repairs. One of the band quarreled with Mary Read's protégé and challenged him to a cutlass duel ashore, as was the custom among the buccaneers. Learning of this, poor Mary was much alarmed. On the one hand she could not consider her loved one's refusing the challenge, for she worshiped courage more than love. On the other hand she feared the outcome of the encounter.

She decided to expose her own life instead of letting her friend's be hazarded. Therefore she sought a quarrel with his adversary and challenged him to immediate combat. The pirate accepted her challenge and the time was set for two hours before the duel with the young man whom Mary wished to save. The weapons were pistols and cutlass, and Mary Read had the happiness of killing her man and saving the object of her affections.

THAT was the last ray of sunshine in Mary Read's sentimental history. Of Anne Bonny's further affairs of the heart the narrative is silent. It seems likely that she and Captain Rackam voyaged together to the end.

Toward the latter part of the year 1720 the inevitable happened. Rackam and his fleet and all therein were captured by a British frigate and cast into prison at Port Royal. In twos and threes and half-dozens they were hanged after speedy trials.

It was characteristic of Anne Bonny that when Rackam was permitted to see her in her prison cell, on the day of his execution, this woman "pyrate" who had become far more famous than her master and had resisted capture with the ferocity of a tigress, spat out at him:

"I'm sorry to see you here. But if you had fought like a man, you needn't have been hanged like a dog!"

Anne Bonny and Mary Read were convicted before the High Court of Justice November 28, 1720. There had been no quibbles about hanging the rest of the pirates, but the Court did not know what to do with the women. They were as guilty as the men, and had been properly convicted, but the Court hemmed and hawed—and waited, remanding them to prison and reprieving them from time to time. A violent fever presently relieved them of all responsibility so far as Mary Read was concerned. She died before she had been in jail six months. Anne Bonny lived, but what her end was no one knows.

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The Open Night*

A tale of "The Crook and the Doctor"

by John I. Cochrane M.D.

IN MY little office in the Penitentiary Hospital on Blackwell's Island four of us sat at evening dinner. Radburn and Dietmann were trusty orderlies in stripes; Lawson was night-keeper, and I was the young prison doctor.

Though my three companions play small part in the story, they must be introduced. Radburn had been at the top of his career—leading man in "Suwanee" at the Academy, and a much-loved matinée-idol—when he had run away with and married the daughter of a big Tammany chief. The vengeful father-in-law had railroaded him to the Pen. on trumped-up charges; and now he was grateful for the chance to serve as one of my orderlies. Already he was dreaming of future triumphs and nursing the thinning hairs on his summit.

Dietmann had been only a few months in this country, but had made much money in his Broadway restaurant, when he had spoken unwisely and harshly to the Captain of his precinct. Hence he was learning his lesson in our brand of Freedom. But he had money in the bank and knew how to make more on his release. Next time, moreover, he would know better than to speak unkindly to his Tammany Overlord, when that potentate should drop into his place for his monthly rake-off.

Lawson, too, was no common "screw." Ex-millionaire and rescued ruin, he was serving a period of probation on a keeper's pittance, pathetically patching his worn silk underwear, and looking to a new start down-town at the end of the year. I was only the resident interne; but I had cleaned the service of graft; was learning things not in books, and had the loyal devotion of every crook on the island—of which more anon.

All this by way of explanation that we had reason to be a perfectly cheerful party as we sat at meat in my office, partitioned off the end of the male ward. We sat at our square table which, thanks to Dietmann's long purse and my "Doctor's Rations," was well supplied; we had hope, health and good tobacco. What more could man require?

Nevertheless, this evening we were under a cloud. We had got to coffee and cigarettes, and still the table-talk would not go.

*Those who in previous numbers of ADVENTURE read "The Crook and the Doctor" and "Cupid and the Crook" will not have forgotten those virile stories of the prison doctor and "Sled" Wheeler, the great crook who forces the reader's genuine awe and admiration by his tremendous force, his essential cleanness and his splendid brain and nerve. It is enough to say that the present story deals with the same characters and is even stronger than the others. Facing page 1 will be found a word on the extent to which these stories are founded upon actual facts and real people.—THE EDITOR.

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"*What* is the matter with us?" I asked at length. "Are you fellows afraid the new Warden will send you to the stone-quarry?"

But the two in stripes smoked in silence. It was Lawson who answered. "He might —he's a mighty new broom, is James G."

He spoke in a low tone, and got up to put the coffee-pot on the radiator. Before returning to his chair he took a furtive peep out at the open door; then, as he sat down and got out the makings, he tilted his head toward the dim ward outside and went on in a whisper:

"But that isn't what is sitting on our chests. It is the same old nightmare. Your friend and Guardian Angel, Sled Wheeler, is in another of his black silent fits!"

"Again?" And I found I was whispering. "I thought we had seen the last of those, after he had helped me clean up the service and get rid of the grafters. Is it as bad as ever, this time?"

"Worse, by Gad!" Radburn answered with emphasis.

Actor now as always, his present rôle was that of Burly British Dreadnought. Yet he used his first-conspirator's hiss and glanced over his shoulder as he went on:

"On my soul, I believe that man Wheeler is the Devil himself. For a week he hasn't said a word, except to you when you come up for rounds. He just paces the aisle with that sleek tiger-tread, his green eyes narrowed to slits, and not a man of the whole crowd dares to speak above a whisper. He's still at it!"

We all turned to follow his glance through the open door, where the lamp-light shone across the empty space at the end of the ward.

Directly opposite was the door of the stairway that led down to the prison corridor; on the right stood the drug-cabinet between two barred windows; to the left the dark aisle led away between long rows of cots.

Out of this dark now glided a lithe, silent figure in stripes, moving with a smooth ease that meant muscle—and nerve-force plus. Passing the door, the face flashed out in profile, keenly powerful, merciless and brooding.

Turning before the drug-cabinet it repassed and vanished into darkness; and in the office the silence deepened. For some moments not a word was spoken. We looked at each other meaningly.

"TALK about your Reigns of Terror!" It was Radburn's stage whisper. "I have been wherever English is talked, but I never saw anything like the power of that man to scare folks! I have seen a lot of bad men, but I never saw an eye like Sled Wheeler's. He goes out next week, and I shall be mighty glad if he doesn't croak somebody before he goes!"

"What cussed nonsense!" I broke in. "Do you suppose he wants to serve a life-sentence or go to the chair? He isn't going to kill just for the sake of killing!"

"Vy not?" Dietmann placidly removed his pipe to inquire. "He has killed a dozen outsite, alretty! Und he hass such a pull mit der Dep. he coult croak anypody und get py. Look vat he did to Henry, und not a vord said to him!"

"How many times have I pointed out," I said, exasperated, "that he only did that to save me from the oil of vitriol that Henry had all fixed to throw in my face? The cur would have fixed me so no one would ever recognize me, if Wheeler hadn't made an example of him! Wheeler explained that himself. What is more, I never could have cleaned out the grafters if Wheeler hadn't helped. And let me tell you something I only found out to-day. It was Wheeler who had you two fellows sent up here as orderlies, because he thought I'd like it!"

Radburn, in the act of returning his cigarette to his mouth, paused with lips parted. Dietmann chuckled gently:

"Sure, I knew it!" said he. "He iss always chewing der rag mit der Dep. und I am avake pehind der curtains ven dey talks apoud Radburn, yet."

"Now wouldn't that——" Radburn began slowly. Then of a sudden, he thumped the table softly, "By Jove! I believe I've got it!"

"Got what?" I asked.

"The reason for Wheeler's dumps. I'm laying odds that his pull with the Dep. will be no good under the new warden! And if that's it, I can see myself in the chain-gang at the quarry!"

And he paled at the thought.

"By Heck, I forgot!"

Lawson's feet and front chair-legs came down with a slam, and he spoke almost full-voice:

"We will have a chance to see whether

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his pull holds or not, right away quick! James G. has put a new screw on the job—a night-watchman—and it is his stunt to come sneaking up here every hour after eight, to see if this door is locked." He indicated the door behind him, leading to the women's ward, and leaned farther forward. "Suppose no one has put the new man hep to Wheeler! Suppose he says something about Radburn's being up after bed-hour, or gets fresh with the Doctor here. We all know the answer!"

"I should—say—we—do!" Radburn's eyes dilated. "There will be another horrible Red Thing without any face, flopping and screeching in a pool of blood in front of the drug-cabinet, and the Doctor will have another messy job patching up what's left of the new screw!"

Slowly and shudderingly he turned his head, as if against his will, until his glance fell on a large irregular black splotch on the boards outside the office-door—ugly record of Henry's finish.

"And that's no joke!" I sat up rigidly. "Somebody has got to wise up that watchman! It would be criminal negligence to let him come up here and get his! What time is it now?"

"He's due right now."

Hurriedly cramming his watch back into his pocket, Lawson had half raised himself by his chair-arms when Dietmann held up his pipe-stem.

"Listen!"

The latch of the stairway door opposite rattled, and at the same instant the great cracksman glided into sight. We held our breaths and watched the scene set before us as on a stage.

A big black-whiskered man in keeper's blue stepped through the door, just in time to come face to face with Wheeler turning on his last lap.

FOR five everlasting seconds the two stood motionless; the watchman with jaw dropped and staring, while the dangerous cracksman looked him over with deliberate insolence. And in the back of the man in stripes, so lightly poised, there was danger—danger explosive and horrible. The lift of an eyelid would start things. Lawson's chair-arms creaked under his shaking hands.

But the watchman's look wavered and dropped. He turned to fumble at the catch of the door behind him. In an instant the man in stripes had vanished into the darkness down the ward.

Lawson let himself down with an audible sigh of relief.

"Who-ee! That was a close shave!" murmured he. "But it's sure somebody has put that screw wise, all right!" he added thankfully.

But, whoever had been his informant, the watchman had not been thoroughly posted on the state of affairs in the hospital, as his next move showed.

Having made sure the danger was past, he came on toward the office, regaining insolent authority with each step. With one hand on the door-frame, he smiled down at us patronizingly:

"We—ll, Doc!" he chortled. "Having a little late supper with the boys?"

Now I had not been troubled by familiarity from the screws, since Wheeler had had one discharged for that offense, and I had no answer ready. Before I could summon my dignity there came from behind the bluecoat a sharp, "*Doctor Corbin!*" with corrective emphasis.

The big man wheeled in his tracks to meet once more the shock of the long green eyes, now narrowed with an evil glitter.

"Doctor Corbin runs this hospital!" Wheeler stated gently. "I wouldn't forget that, if I were you. One man forgot it, and lost his job. Another forgot, and lost his face. Come, *come!*" At the sudden hoarse rasp he shot his cruel face forward, and the big man jumped. "You big bubble-headed boob! Apologize to the Doctor and clear out! Your feet are both lefts—your face is a huge mistake—You make me nervous—*Beat it!*"

"Sure—Sure! No offense, Doctor. No offense!" the wretched watchman stammered.

Edging away carefully, like a man who feared to provoke a tiger to spring, he squeezed between Lawson's chair and the radiator, the while he muttered low and soulfully:

"Lemme try that door; 'n then, by ——, I'll get out o' here!"

He gave the lock a perfunctory turn, edged his perilous way back, drawing himself up thin to avoid brushing the incarnate disaster in the doorway, and soon the stairway door closed behind him softly.

Though we all breathed easier, not one

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of us smiled; for we had seen Henry after Wheeler had manhandled him. But when he had watched the collapsed official out of sight the cracksman turned to us a face that was fascinating in its grim humor. The thin lips curled a bit, with the stern indulgence of a trainer who has put an obstinate animal through its tricks, as he addressed me.

"He's new to his job, Doctor; don't mind him!"

His keen eyes flashed round the circle of worried faces and came back to me:

"What's wrong in the House of Lords?"

Thus he had christened our dinner-quartette on Radburn's arrival. His handsome face, mobile but merciless, was almost kind now in its question.

"That's what we don't know," I answered. "Won't you come in and tell us?"

"Thanks, I am going to bed. But it is my trouble this time, and you fellows are out of it. Forget it! Good night!"

His straight heavy brows drew down again in a brooding frown as he turned away.

"Good night!" I called.

There was no other sound in the office until the rush of running water at the far end of the ward told us he was drawing his bed-time tub.

But the cloud was lifted. Radburn leaned forward to thump the table with emphasis.

"What an actor! What an *actor* that man would make!" he said with glowing admiration. "If I had his face and temperament, his power to 'get over,' I could fill the Metropolitan a thousand nights running, and say nothing but the alphabet. Say! But his pull is still working all right —what? Ever see a bluff punctured quicker than that? I'll bet that screw is shaking yet!"

"Pull's all right," said I, "but his trouble is more of a mystery than ever. I can't imagine what can be wrong now."

"Must pe he is strapped!" said Dietmann the practical. "Spent all his roll on der sick crooks, und goes oudt mitoudt a cent."

"I am going to ask him to-morrow, and ask him if I can help," I announced suddenly. "It is little enough return after all he has done for me."

"Good luck to you!" Radburn touched an imaginary cap. "I wish you joy of your job; but not for Willy!"

"Und tell him," added Dietmann, "he can have vat he needs—up to four figures."

"Well look who's here!" Radburn laughed. "What has struck you, Dutch?"

"I know he is goot," Dietmann puffed placidly. "I know his name is goot in Berlin, or Amsterdam, for more dan four figures."

"Well, I'll be ——!"

The actor's mouth dropped open and he stared at the stolid German until his glasses fell into his lap.

"What else do you know?" he fired out explosively.

"Noding. Und dat is more as you know, alreaty!"

The bell rang just then, meaning that some prisoner in cells had a pain, and Dietmann made an effective exit with his box of simple remedies. As night orderly, it was his duty to attend to such small matters as did not justify rousing me from my august repose.

When he returned, there was nothing to be got out of him. He admitted that he had heard of Wheeler on the other side and that he had a financial rating. Then he shut his lips tight and would say no more.

WHEN I said my good night and went down to my room to an early bed, to be fresh for operations the next day, I had new matter for reflection concerning the world-famous Dan, or "Sled," Wheeler. For three months I had come in contact with him every day, yet he was more of a puzzle than at first.

He had made it easy for me to clean the hospital of graft and cruelty—had, in fact, done it for me—by reason of his friendship with the Dep. or Deputy Warden. And he had saved my face from mutilation by Henry's sulphuric acid, had pulled me out of a bad scrape when a "plant" threatened me with life-imprisonment, in a manner too complex for narration here. His brief explanation was that he had found me "clean, and kind to the poor devils in the hospital," so he didn't "stand for" my "getting the worst of it." But he had done more than that. He had watched over me with fatherly care and more than womanly tact; my success with the service and the devotion of the criminals I owed almost wholly to him.

Yet I knew no more about him than about any crook on the tiers. I knew he

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was a past master of all higher outlaw crafts, admired and feared by the underworld more than any living man. I did not know why he was for the first time serving a prison term among the low criminals, whose very sight he loathed; why he had spent the three hundred dollars that he had in his Mitchell clothes on entrance, buying delicacies for convalescents in hospital when not one of them would dare come near enough to thank him—even if they had known of his gifts.

And I could not imagine why he held himself so fiercely aloof even from us of the "House of Lords." To be sure he always spoke to me with a respect that at times made me suspicious of irony; and his speech showed some culture as well as knowledge of matters rare and varied; yet for the most part he paced the ward in lofty isolation, well-groomed and dangerously unapproachable, magnetic with virility and graceful power, a figure of fascinating mystery.

Yet he was troubled. I could form no notion of the reason for his melancholy silence; but he had done so much for me that my duty was clear; I must go to him boldly and offer to do anything in my power to help him. On that determination I slept.

CHAPTER II

THE VISITING SURGEON'S BUNGLE

IT WAS almost two o'clock the next afternoon—time for the launch which was to bring my new Visiting Surgeon. I climbed the stairs to the hospital, to see that all was ready in my new operating-room.

Riley, the day keeper whom I had trained as Head Surgical Nurse, was chestily bossing his trusty staff on the finishing touches.

"Back up there! Aisy wid that wheel-litter, ye cross-eyed Dago! D'ye think ye're r-runnin' a push-carrt on Hesther Street? Lave it be, now! All ready, sor!"

He came to attention and saluted. Walsh, ex-Bowery-bouncer and my Head Masseur, winked solemnly at me over Riley's dignified shoulder.

"Is Collins all prepared?"

"He is, sor. By Cripes! I forgot, he wants to speak t'ye a minute, if ye please, sor."

I was a bit worried about the case—a bad bunch of glands under the jaw—and went at once to Collins' bed.

Out of a white circular frame of bandages a pair of troubled blue eyes looked up in appeal.

"Doctor, won't you please do the cuttin' yourself? I thought you was goin' to do it, but they say the new Professor's a bum one—I don't want him workin' on me. Please, Doctor?"

The troubled eyes wandered to the bed's foot, where I knew without looking that Wheeler was watching out for me as usual; the green eyes were bent on me gravely.

"I'm sorry, Collins, but the new man has the say about that." Hurt by the hopeless despair and suffering before me, I went on, "But I promise to see you through all right. Will that do?"

"Thank you, Doctor. God bless you!" He choked, and weak tears filled his eyes.

There is no faith more complete than that of a crook. As I turned away, I was startled by a strange expression on Wheeler's cruel face, and it occurred to me that I had promised more than I could perform. But, rather than lose the childlike confidence of the whole prison, I was determined to—we would see when the time came.

Just then Dr. Allen, from the City Hospital, came up with his inhaler and stethoscope, ready to start the ether. He said that my new Visiting was on the way upstairs. I went to meet him.

Dr. Edson, my former Visiting, had been one of the big men of New York. Also he was of the salt of the solar system, as a visiting surgeon. From an interne's viewpoint, that meant that he did not "hog" all the work himself, but usually took his place at the instrument-tray (as first-assistant) and told me to "Go ahead." Now in that way one can learn surgery, and I had made the most of my chance. But now, just when I was beginning to fancy myself a bit as a surgeon, along comes this new Visiting—and his name was Lazinsky!

He looked it! As he stepped through the stairway-door he wore curly-shiny black whiskers, around a thick-lipped and nauseous smile. And his nose—you can't say Lazinsky with a *retroussé* proboscis. Also he had an air of busy importance that made it clear he had to get back to Manhattan

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quick, or something would happen to it in his absence.

In his right hand he carried a brand-new instrument-bag of near-leather, he held out his left to me condescendingly as he walked across the ward.

"Doctor er—Corbin—is it?" He looked into the spotless white room, my new and special pride, and his sick smile widened with contempt. "So *this* is my *operating-room*—is it? Any place to scrub up?"

I had no use for the left hand, and I did not answer in words, but showed him to the set-bowls. As he scrubbed, he issued orders, which had been forestalled, and presently called:

"You can start your ether!"

"The man is under, and on the table."

He hurried into the gown which Riley held ready for him—looking as if he would punch his nose with pleasure—and came to the table where I was waiting.

AFTER palpating the tumor with wise fingers, he made his opening incision with assurance and éclat. But at the first needle-like jet he dropped his scalpel, snatched the artery-clamps from my hands and made three bungling jabs before he got the little spurter. Allen looked up from his cone, caught my eye and slowly drooped one lid.

Then followed a gruelling fifty minutes. The Surgeon passed through the successive stages of confidence, slow surprise, determination, hurried anxiety and final bewilderment, as he came to realize what he was up against. The hard fibrous mass of glands lay beneath the angle of the jaw, in a tangle of nerve-trunks and blood-vessels, and it was a grisly proposition for the best of them.

At the end of an hour and a quarter Dr. Lazinsky was bathed in sweat; his hands were shaking with fatigue and nerve-strain; he was pushing and pulling with handle and fingers in futile attempts at blunt dissection, and only a part of the upper side of the mass was freed. Time pressed, but down among the bigger nerves and arteries he did not dare use the edge freely. He began to look up at the clock every two minutes.

It was on one of these many trips to the clock that his harried glance fell upon Wheeler in the door of the sterilizing-room. The caustic scorn in the great crook's face may have pierced even the surgeon's thick skin. For I had just noticed that Wheeler had gone to the bowls to scrub, when I was surprised to see the Jew pick up a pair of sharp curved scissors with desperate haste. Before I realized what he was doing, he had jammed them down under the mass and with the first stroke, cut clean off the big facial artery and its accompanying veins! This, too, at the bottom of a deep and narrow wound with tough fibrous walls, where the surrounding nerves and arteries made hurried enlargement impossible!

At the first spouting rush of mingled dark and light blood, Dr. Lazinsky turned a putty gray, and the scissors dropped from his palsied hand.

I crowded a large pad into the wound and growled:

"Brace up! Mouse-tooth forceps! Ready?"

Waggling the forceps weakly over the wound, he gasped:

"Y—yes—ready!"

The pad removed, the rushing geyser of blood that flooded the whole field stampeded him afresh.

"S—sponge! *Stoppit!* Stop it!" His voice cracked with fright.

Again I damned the murderous rush and held the pad firm.

"There—there! That'll hold it!"

He was panting like a spent runner.

"But this pressure can't be kept up!" I snapped. "It shuts off his wind. You've got to dive for those ends in the dark, and *keep* diving till you get 'em, or we'll have a dead man here in two minutes!"

"Heart failing!" announced Allen quietly, and he slipped a hyp needle into the chest-muscles.

"Ready! *Get* busy!" I gritted through my teeth and shoved the clamps into the surgeon's flaccid hand.

But he was all in—helpless in the crisis. When I took away the pad, he could hardly find even the wound beneath the spouting blood, and he reeled like a drunken man. But he clung weakly to the forceps still, and my hands itched for the feel of them. I was just about to ask Allen to drop the cone and act as my assistant, then take Lazinsky's place, when I was saved this horrible breach of "professional etiquette"!

A deft strong hand relieved mine at the pad, another placed the clamps in my fin-

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gers, and there stood Wheeler—gowned and scrubbed, cool and keen! Perhaps his mettlesome voice didn't sound good!

"Go to it, boy!"

I lost no time.

"When I say 'Now!' take off the pad *quick*, and clap it back as soon as the forceps click—then have another pair ready! —NOW!"

Click!—"Another pair—Now!" *Click!* —"Another pair—Now!" *Click!* Four—five—six times—the flow was halved! "Another pair—NOW!" *Click!* "Now sponge!"

This time the saturated pad came away and left the wound dry to the bottom.

"Pretty work!" said Wheeler, turning to get ready the ligatures.

"And not a minute too soon," added Allen, as he started artificial respiration. "Thirty seconds more, and he'd been over the dam!"

Now that it was over, it looked simple enough—just to jab in the dark until you got those spurting ends—but it meant a dead man if you didn't get 'em, and get them quick.

But the point of this anecdote is the behavior of the new Visiting. When at last Collins was breathing regularly, Dr. Lazinsky was not to be seen. After the operation was finished and the man back in bed with the hot bottles, I asked Radburn what he was chuckling over.

"Didn't you see him? He has went—flew!" he waved extravagant hands. "But did you hear what Wheeler growled at him, when he pushed him away? It sounded like German or Hebrew. His Whiskers landed just about here in one jump! I tried to tell him about Wheeler's record while I helped him into his frock-coat, but he was yammering he was a "sick man," and lit out for home and mother—never stopped for his nice new paper-bag! I bet we never see his Whiskers more—What?"

And we never did.

"Do you want to go on with that appendix case, Doctor?"

It was Wheeler. Standing in the door, gowned and turbaned, he looked like a green-eyed Brahmin.

"I do, if you will help."

He nodded, and we went to work. He had watched every operation, knew my text-books from cover to cover, and was a wizard at anything done with hands. I have worked with but one better assistant.

Moreover, he took a keen interest in every detail of the technique. In closing the wall, I introduced a kink of my own, and he spoke for the first time:

"What's that for? Edson didn't do that?"

"For a stronger wall—man could almost be about in a week."

Afterward I recalled that he was noticeably struck by that, that his eyes narrowed thoughtfully. But he slipped away as soon as we had finished.

It was at dusk. The ward was quiet and darkening when Radburn knocked at the open door of the office, where I was resting and reviewing what had come to pass.

"Now is your chance to talk to Wheeler alone," said he. "He is in his quarters and he doesn't look quite so dangerous."

As I got up and started down the ward he grinned and asked:

"Any message to send home—last words, or anything?"

CHAPTER III

ORDERS

WHEELER'S "quarters" were the space about the last bed at the end of the ward, enclosed by screens and having one west window overlooking Manhattan. A stand at his bed-head bore a few tasteful toilet-articles, by no means cheap, and some books. On the wall hung a big British bath-tub, and there was one chair. Wheeler himself was always faultlessly well-groomed. Though he wore the striped vest and trousers, he never put on the ugly, baggy coat. His shirt, collar, cuffs and tie were spotless white; a snowy handkerchief tucked in his vest, and his early-white hair smoothly parted in the middle, made a startling background for a face that struck you like a blow. Every movement of his athletic figure was smoothly graceful.

He stood at the window with arms folded, looking at the city's reddening sky-line. At the sound of my step he turned.

"A chair, Doctor?" His manner was perfect and remote.

"Thanks. But I'll look at the sunset."

And I took a place beside him at the window. For a time we did not speak.

While the crimson deepened behind the city, I was wondering what days and nights

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he was living over in mind—what vivid scenes the sight of the city recalled; what trouble was waiting for him there. As if in answer, he leveled a finger at New York.

"There is the great Easy Mark!" he said. "The softest bunch of boobs and lollops in the world. You don't need to give 'em anything for their money—don't need to take it from them. Just *show* 'em something—anything to fool 'em—and they fall over themselves to stuff your pockets."

Long afterward I saw the truth of that analysis. "*Show* 'em something," is the essence of easy-money schemes. But at the time I didn't get it. I was still turning it over when he turned to me, leaning back against the window-frame and watching me through narrowed lids.

"I could hear your talk in the office last night. Much obliged, but I don't need money. That comes easily." Now his voice was low, his speech correct without affectation.

"So I can't do anything to help?"

"I didn't say that. Why do you want to help—if you do want to?"

His coldness made it hard to answer. When a man has done you the slight service of saving your eyesight and keeping you out of prison at the risk of life-imprisonment himself—for that he had done—it's embarrassing to have him ask: "Why do you want to help—if you do want to?"

"You ought to know," I muttered. Then, exasperated, I snapped, "What do you think I am, anyhow?"

"One of the squarest men I ever met," he said slowly and distinctly. I flushed red and repentant in a second. "Square" is the highest praise in crookdom. "But until last night I had begun to think," he continued, "that you had seen enough of me."

"And all the time I was scared to—wanted to ask you, and didn't dare," I admitted.

His face lighted, then the black brows drew straight as he stood up.

"This will never get us anywhere! There's no time to lose now. I wasn't going to ask you, if you never spoke; and if you had waited another day it would have been too late. You can help—the only man who can—but first I want you to know why I helped you to-day."

"I know—because I was in a tight place."

"*And* because I wanted to see if your nerve held good when you didn't have Dr. Edson at your elbow to depend on. Now do you want to help?"

"Try me. *You* are wasting time now."

"You're right. But if you knew what you were in for, you wouldn't be crowding." His lips curled a bit in an ominous little smile. He looked down at the watch on the table. "I was hoping you would come, and I need you right now. I have had Joe press your evening clothes and lay them out on your bed down-stairs. Go put them on, and come back to report."

"Yes," said I meekly, and went.

JOE was my small striped valet or body-servant, and he served me well and devotedly. I found he had pressed the suit and was waiting to help me dress. During the process he told me the news of the prison, and a part of it was that we had a new star safe-worker on the tiers—just sent up for a short "bit" on suspicion.

This set my mind running on bank burglars, and a story goes with that. It was one of the coincidences of life, so commonly met and so tritely talked over, that bank-burgling reminded me of a classmate named Soldano and his queer remark. Only two evenings before I had told them about it up in the office; and all the time I was dressing in my room it kept recurring to me as oddly in keeping with my present peculiar position. This was the remark, and the occasion that led up to it:

Soldano was one of the most brilliant and attractive fellows in the class of '9— at Harvard. He had taken highest honors, as well as cups for all the middle-distance events, and practised six hours a day on the violin. Therefore he had few play-hours and fewer close companions. He had singled me out to share his rare relaxations, and it was one night when he had dragged me into town to hear Sarasate that the thing happened.

That night was my introduction to really great violin-music, and I was swept off my feet. From the very first slow sweep of the bow across his Strad, that gracefully leonine Spaniard had done things to my works. That was why, in an emotional interval between shivery gipsy-dances, I had been impelled to unbosom myself of my excuse for existence to the vivid chap at my side. In return I asked him impressively what

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career he had chosen—what he was so arduously fitting himself for.

I can see his teeth flash in his square-jawed grin as he answered promptly:

"For a scientific bank burglar!"

And for the rest of that evening my sullenly sarcastic comments had caused him so to hug himself and chuckle that he never did get to tell me what he meant by that.

Now for the coincidence. I was thinking of Soldano's remarkable statement when I climbed the stairs to the Penitentiary Hospital, to report for orders to the man Josiah Flynt had called the "greatest of living crooks." And then things happened as follows.

Wheeler looked me over critically.

"Who made that suit—who cut it?" he asked grimly.

"Parr—or whatever his name is, at Smith Brothers. Why?"

He shook his head—he delighted in being low-down that way when he was feeling good—and gave my tie a twitch.

"To-night you are going to find out some things—things about me, that have worried the 'House of Lords.' But you are going to hear them from some one you know. I could tell you, but I'd hate to have you think I was lying."

"I'd hate worse to say so," I put in.

"You remember the classmate you told about the other night—the 'scientific bank burglar'?" he asked in an introductory tone. Then he stopped, waited until I had got my mouth shut again, and resumed, "Well, if you take the six-o'clock boat you will just get him at the Harvard Club. Don't tell him you ever saw me. If he thinks you are still at the City Hospital, so much the better, but just say to him when you have got him alone, 'I am sent by one inside'—Got it?" he added impatiently. "You've left that face open again—Shut it, and repeat what I told you."

"I was sent by one in——"

"*Am* not *was!* This isn't English 12," said he grimly, "and the world is a bigger place even than Harvard."

"I *am* sent by one inside," I repeated with exaggerated sweetness.

"Now," said he, drawing his brows together, "don't start anything!"

"I beg your pardon," said I hastily. "Is that all?"

"That's all. Be a good boy!"

And as I turned to leave, I felt on my back the light "Lucky Touch."

Radburn had lined up the hospital "Orderlies" to salaam deeply as I passed on my way to the door. I waved them aside haughtily.

"You're not there, you know; you are just figures in a dream!" I left them stroking their jaws thoughtfully and looking at one another open-mouthed.

As I hurried down the stairs I told myself, "This certainly starts off with a rush!"

And I jumped aboard the little launch just as she cast off from the float. Up in the bow I found Riley, going home for the night and for a week's vacation. Already he had started the celebration, was well lit up.

"Week off, on full pay. Dan says I get it, an' I get it. Tha's how 'tis! An' he gets man t' take m' place. Ol' man Howe's son, Frank—he's goin' take m' place. Wha'? Nossirree—he ain't no screw, Frank ain't! Nommuch! Ain't ch' ever seen Frank's name 'n the papers? Herroism! Hangin' out ten-story windehs by 's legs an' swingin' women an' children t' safety—'n all them kind o' stunts.

"Jus' back fr'm *Ber*-lin, Frank is! Delegate to somethin'—be'n teachin' Dagoes t' fight fire N' York fashion—come back covered with medals and ribbons—goin' to be Division Chief nex' month. Helluva big man—he is—an' a great friend o' Dan's! Sh-h-h!" He grabbed my arm and looked wildly around, frightened sober for the time. "Forgot! Mustn't mention Dan. Didn't say Dan who—did I?" he whispered. "F'r God's sake, don't tell 'im,' r he'll have me broke!"

And for the rest of the crossing he was quiet, hiding behind the cabin, as if he feared Wheeler could see him from the Penitentiary windows. I listened to the slap-slap of the waves on the little boat's quarter, and thought about the man whose name had such power. Who could be farther apart than this drunken keeper and my brilliant classmate at Harvard?

CHAPTER IV

SOLDANO ADDS TO THE MYSTERY

THE homelike New England atmosphere of the new club-house made me feel as if I were on solid earth once more.

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The big reading-room was empty save for one man writing at the table near the fire. I did not need a second glance at the curly head and broad shoulders to be sure it was Soldano.

But, absorbed as always, he did not hear me until I stood opposite him.

"Hello!"

"Corbin! By the Great High Jinks!"

As we stood with hands gripped across the table his face, flushed with pleasure and alight with his square-jawed grin, was good to look upon.

"Man alive, you have saved my life!" He pumped my arm delightedly. "I'm footloose and forlorn in this lonely town. What is your program for the evening?"

"I was going to tag you around, if you——"

"Bully! Wait until I get this off!"

While he hastily finished and addressed the letter I saw he was the same old Soldano, vividly alive and eagerly determined, but ripened and travel-trained—tanned with the sun of hot places.

The letter out of the way, we faced each other across the fire with expectant grins—half embarrassed. But he was ever headlong.

"Life's short; let's get over the preliminaries," he started cheerily. "Since graduation I have rooted around all over the map, learning things, where the questions of the class-secretary have not reached me. I'm here—but that comes later. I see by the class report that you are an M. D., on the staff at the City Hospital. Now we have got to take the works out of this town for old sake's sake. Where do we begin? What's worth doing?"

"Suppose we burgle a few banks, scientifically—What?" I proposed soberly.

He slapped his thighs and threw back his head in his old silent laugh.

"I *knew* you'd never forget it! It was a fool thing to say anyhow, but perhaps I can tell you now—so you'll believe it—but look hyah! Huccome you looked me up hyah, honey?"

When extra-pleased it was his way to swing suddenly into soft South-talk.

"I am sent by one inside," I repeated, feeling dubiously foolish.

But there was no doubt about the effect. He bounced from his chair and made a rapid round of doors and windows before returning to shake an accusing fist in my face.

"Been holding out on me all this time, have you, you old Indian?"

"Holding nothing! I don't know what it's all about. I was told to say that fool thing. If you know what it means, you know more than I do," I retorted. "I'm all tangled up."

"You'll be worse before you're better," he consoled me grimly. "I don't know how you stumbled into this, but it is up to me to tell you some things. Before I have finished you'll be tangled up a lot worse, or else you will know what I meant by 'bank burgling,' as well as what you were sent here for."

"I'm listening."

"You'd better be! Now, first off—you understand that you have been chosen because you can keep your mouth shut and do as you are told. That is the main thing. Got that?"

"Yes. But chosen by whom, for what?" said I. "Sounds like a secret society."

"You'd better believe it's secret—so secret that nobody knows of its existence—so secret that probably you will never know much more about it than you do right this minute! And that is why I am chosen to initiate you into the First Degree, or Outer Circle—whatever you choose to call it, for it is an order *without* jargon or ceremonies—because I can't tell you *what I don't know*. See?"

"Hum! Wait a minute! I see you can't tell what you don't know." I plodded after, slowly, trying to keep things right side up. "I may have dropped a stitch or slipped a cog somewhere; but it seems to me, *now*, that if I belonged to anything I'd be apt to know it, and if I'm to be told anything about it I ought to know more about it than I do now. I certainly couldn't know less. See here! What are you giving me, anyhow? If this is any fool joke——"

"Corbin!" Soldano laid an impressive finger on my knee, and stared solemnly into my puzzled face. "I don't know who sent you here; but I'll bet he was no practical joker."

"That's right," I subsided meekly. "Well, I don't see how an order can exist unsuspected, but fire away!"

"I can tell you, mighty easily, so far as the Outer Circle is concerned. Here is how it is done: The members of the Outer Circle—my name for it, remember—are fellows who are chosen to do some special

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thing, and to serve a period of probation. If we are useful enough and close-mouthed enough, at the end of the period we may be chosen to know more—promoted; otherwise, we are just let alone. Since you have no desire to follow the thing up, in a few years from now you will probably be uncertain *whether or not you dreamed the whole thing*. You will not let out any secrets, because you don't know any to let out—not even the name of the order, if it has one. Do you see that?"

"Simple enough!" I admitted.

"Simple enough, and effective," he continued. "In the meantime we do as we are told and say nothing about it, even to one another. The result of that is a thorough appreciation of the importance of secrecy, and no desire to leak. Take our case, for instance: I have been delegated to post you up on the matter, and I shall have help in convincing you; but we may get orders at any minute to stop talking about It. Then it ceases to exist, for us, until we get further orders. And now I have told all I know, officially."

"But that's mighty tantalizing," said I. "Can you tell me any more unofficially? This doesn't explain the 'bank burgling.'"

"Sure! I forgot." He grinned, once more easily natural. Leaning back in his chair he went on comfortably:

"I shall have to give you a little of the story of my life. I'll cut it short. To begin with, I am the original fairy-tale kid, an orphan, born at sea, shipwrecked and all that sort of thing. I was brought up by a guardian, who died only last year—Mr. Cartaret, a Southerner and a prince among gentlemen."

He stopped and looked over my head toward the door. An attendant brought him a card on a tray, which he read and handed to me, saying to the attendant, "We'll be right out."

The man left the room. I read on the card:

Your car is waiting

"Have you got a car?" I asked.

Those were the early days of motoring, when electric cabs were a curiosity. He grinned sociably,

"*We* have, for the present. Come and see."

We got into our coats and hats. At the curb an electric stood waiting, and the driver held the door open. We got in, and the driver started off without a word.

THE night was mild and the windows were open. As we rolled softly down the Avenue I leaned back on the cushions and watched the flitting street-lights. We seemed enveloped by an atmosphere of medieval intrigue and romance. At length I broke the luxurious silence,

"Well—you had got to your guardian?"

"Yes." Soldano was eagerly basking in the air of the city, with his face to the window. He took a long breath. "Man, but it is good to be back here after four years of the East! And things are going to happen! Don't you feel it in your bones?"

"M—hm!" I refused to enthuse. "But your guardian?"

"Well—" he leaned back and took up his tale— "he was something of a gentleman sport and gambler himself, a fine old boy; but he was a great admirer of a famous high-class crook and gambler known in this country as Dan or Sled Wheeler. As far back as I can—— What's the matter now?"

"Nothing; thought I was going to sneeze. Go on!"

I leaned back in my corner and got behind my handkerchief. He gave me a suspicious look.

"Your sneeze must be a national calamity when it comes!"

I made no comment and he went on,

"Well, as I was saying, ever since I can remember anything I have heard of the far-flung exploits of this Wheeler. As a kid I begged for his life-story, and never got tired of hearing it.

"He seems to have come of good family, of Spanish-Irish blood, and even as a boy he became a master of the higher outlaw crafts. Before he was of age he was noted in certain circles for incredible skill and absolute fearlessness. The story of his adventures made dime-novels dull by comparison, and fired my tender ambition until I was wild to see the man."

"Have you ever seen him?" I put in, out of courtesy.

"Never, though I have tried. He owned a roulette place in Atlanta, where we lived for a time, but he seldom appeared there except on the yearly Open Night. Those

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Open Nights were select occasions, and I could not get in, even with the help of Mr. Cartaret; so I never saw my hero. But I kept posted on his career, and by the time I had outgrown my youthful ambition to be a great bank burglar, I learned some things about him that led me to the conviction that he was more than a famous crook, more than a superb gambler. It is too long a story for telling here, but I became certain that Dan Wheeler had come to use his reputation as a crook merely as a blind—that behind it he was playing another and a bigger game."

When I had waited a minute for him to go on, I suggested,

"And that game?"

"I am not sure," said he slowly, "that you would believe me if I were to tell you my private conviction on that subject. If you knew the man, now, or had seen, as I have, the prominent men who went into his place in Atlanta on the Open Nights."

"It will do no harm to try?" I proposed.

"See here, Corbin!" He leaned forward with an air of mystery. "What would you say if I should tell you that the nameless order I mentioned was the most secret and most powerful that ever existed? That it moves pieces that alter the face of the map and shape the destinies of nations?"

"Certainly, I believe you, of course!" I said soothingly. "But don't let's get excited about it—and now hadn't we better go and look for the nice gentleman you ran away from? And you will go home with him quietly like a little man!"

"It sure does look like it, I admit," he grinned. "But you don't have to believe any more of it than you can swallow comfortably; and it isn't necessary even to make you believe it. I am simply telling you that I satisfied myself that the job this man Wheeler was on was the sort of thing I wanted to do. When I entered college I still stuck to my purpose; and, when you asked me what I was fitting for, I came nearer telling you than any living man except my guardian, just what I meant to do. But since the job had no name, the first words that came to my mind were 'bank burgling,' which was the goal of my kid ambitions. And that's all!"

"I don't understand," said I. "I don't see how you could *fit yourself* for anything so vague and problematical as this semi-criminal or outlaw fraternity. Do you imagine it to be something like the 'Double Four,' or some of the orders that exist only in fiction?"

"I don't imagine, I *know* that it is bigger than any of those, Corbin. Such a band as the 'Double Four' might be compared to *one arm of the service!* And I know that in order to do the work of a secret agent, say, for one of the big Governments, requires a knowledge of hypnotism as well as jiu-jitsu, of chemistry and psychology, to mention only a few of the necessaries. And since graduation I have been studying human nature in far places with the same object in view. But, while I am waiting and hoping for promotion, I am going to try for a job as war-correspondent on the *Star;* for we are going to see—— Hello! We're here!"

CHAPTER V

UNKNOWN POWERS

WE HAD stopped in front of The Old Eating House, then at Twenty-seventh and Broadway. I got out and followed Soldano in, walking in a sort of preoccupied daze, for his words had been big and suggestive.

Philippe the Urbane himself met us at the door and conducted us to a small retired table specially reserved for us. Moreover, he made us at home with low-voiced deference, brought cocktails with his own hands, and consulted us prayerfully as to what we were to eat. The New World holds no higher honor. It was clear that we had been expected, and it was very pleasant to have things thus made smooth.

When Philippe had gone to see our orders carried out, and we had fished out the cherry at the bottom of the glass, I settled myself to enjoy the evening. I felt that the entertainment called for appreciation.

"I suppose this is a part of the process of convincing me," said I. "I must say the argument is more persuasive than reams of syllogisms; but I would not be prematurely convinced. I can stand more of this kind of proof. Now, to go back to your autobiography and bring it up to date, what are you in New York for just now?"

"Business, partly. The money I have always lived on—on the interest—is to be handed over to me next week; and I've got to reinvest it somehow so it will not need

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attention. But that isn't all. Next week will be the date of this year's Open Night, and I hear it is to be in New York this time!"

"What is this Open Night you speak of? I never heard of it before."

"It was a custom, started I don't know when, for Wheeler to preside in person on that night, in his place in Atlanta or Philadelphia. It was understood that the play at the table on that night was without limit. Moreover, the House (Wheeler) stood ready to play any man at any game for any stakes. The games were anything from gun-play to Tiddledy-Winks; in fact, more than one Bad Man has tried to shoot him up. Then the Bad Man was buried, 'cause he was dead! Then they say there have been several games of Black Chip Poker——"

He stopped at the approach of a waiter with things that would make a man forget almost anything but his stomach. Yet I waited impatiently for the man to get out of earshot, that I might ask.

"What's Black Chip Poker?"

"Poker with a black chip at the bottom of the pile, representing the life of the player," he answered, as he began on a planked steak cheerfully. "It is generally for spite or pure test of nerve, and the penalty is not always paid. But the point of the matter is this: there are big men of all kinds always present at these Open Nights, and it is an event in more ways than one. This time it isn't known who will preside, for Wheeler isn't in the city."

I looked at him, eating with relish, and pinched myself to make sure I was awake. Play poker for your life! They don't do that except in books. But I recalled other impossibilities I had witnessed in the last few months, and knew that one man at least was capable of it. Then, to be saying something, I asked,

"Where is this man Wheeler?"

"Now you're talking! If you could tell that, there are those in New York who would make up a handsome purse for you. He may be in China or Hoboken. I found his trail, wide and wonderful, in the Far East, and the question of his whereabouts is what is worrying the sporting circles. There is a rumor that a man of the same name is in the Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island; but you might better look for the Czar of all the Russias in a Tramp's Lodging House. He hates a common cheap crook as the devil hates Holy Water."

"Then it might be a good place to hide, if he——"

"Great Cats!" He stared at me in startled surprise. "Say! You are right next door. Could you get into the Pen. to——"

I could feel myself flushing with the effort to think of something that would throw him off the track, when he stopped to look at some one who was approaching from behind me.

"PARDON me, gentlemen." A little Japanese gentleman in evening dress was bowing low and gracefully. As we rose, he offered his hand and spoke to each in turn.

"I intrude merely to welcome our latest recruit," to me, "and to offer best wishes for success and promotion." This last to Soldano. Then he took a card from his pocket and laid it on the table face downward; at the same time saying gravely, "I shall see you later. I wish you a pleasant evening."

Again bowing ceremoniously, he withdrew to a table at the far side of the room. I watched his short figure, topped by short bristly black hair, pass swiftly between the tables; then turned to find my companion smiling at my astonishment. As I sat down I said,

"I suppose this is some of the 'help in convincing me' that you mentioned. Isn't that the Jap who sat at our table at Memorial—the one we called the Marquis?"

"It sure is. And since the death of his uncle he *is* the Marquis. He is a big man in his country, and one of their diplomatic lights."

"D'you mean to tell me he is one of your bank burglars?"

"Come! Let up on that! That was only a symbol—a joke, if you like."

As he spoke, he picked up the card the little nobleman had left. His face flashed eager delight as he read it and handed it to me.

"Talk about luck," said he, "there *will* be proceedings, and we shall be among those present! Just look at that!"

The card was just like the one given us at the club-house, only the written inscription read:

J. SEARING—Admit Mr. Soldano and Dr. Corbin.

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"Well, what does it mean?" I asked resignedly.

"James Searing," said Soldano, "is, next to Sled Wheeler, the man I have most wanted to see—a famous gambler and all-round dangerous man. His friends claim he can take Wheeler's scalp, and I believe there is an old grudge between the two. Searing is a much younger man, a Westerner and a crack shot with notches on his gun; yet Wheeler's friends say Searing is afraid to meet their man. Searing is evidently running a roulette-place in town right now—this evening. If Wheeler should turn up—Hully Gee!"

He proceeded to eat as if to get it over in a hurry. I had no appetite.

"Then this card," said I, "is not only a ticket of admission, but an order to go there?"

"Yep, and more than that, it is a warning that we are to stop talking about—what we have been talking about. You remember I told you it wasn't to be mentioned without orders from inside, even among ourselves. I had my orders to tell you certain things. We were allowed to talk freely, and now we are ordered to shut up. If you have any vague hopes of learning any more about this thing, *you may as well dismiss them for good and all!* Better men than you have tried and failed. And let me warn you that the Marquis is watching me, and he is a lip-reader."

I twisted about to look for the nobleman of Nippon. He certainly was looking our way through a pair of queer nose-glasses. At the table with him were a pair of distinguished-looking men, strange and foreign. All three looked up to smile and raise their wine-glasses. I began to feel an omnipresent but hidden power.

"Then our evening is blocked out for us? I had hoped we might see a show."

"We can—in fact, I'll bet we'll find tickets waiting at the box-office. There won't be much doing at Searing's place until after show-hours."

I REMEMBER that we saw Coghlan in "The Royal Box." We found our seats waiting as Soldano had said, and I recalled having said I wanted to see the play only a day or two before, up in the Pen. hospital. My mental picture of Charles Coghlan ever since that night has been associated with that of the Marquis and with my new conception of Dan Wheeler, as a man of power and distinction. But I saw little of the play, for my companion was telling me tales of his hero, Wheeler. They were tales indeed of "far-flung exploits," of feats of strength and nerve and magic. All bore the imprint of the man's fascinating personality and artistic instinct; every one had a certain finish and grim humor very characteristic.

We left the old Fifth Avenue Theater and, as the electric bore us up-town, I turned to Soldano:

"It certainly has been a velvety evening, so far, and I have enjoyed it. I want to say that you can consider your stunt finished, so far as convincing me is concerned. I shall obey orders and keep my mouth shut. And, moreover, the process has been not only painless but delightful. That's why I am satisfied to let it go at that, and not try to ferret out anything I am not supposed to meddle with. I have perfect confidence in the power and wisdom of whoever is at the helm. Is that satisfactory?"

"Sure! That is the inevitable result. And you are wise—it's perfectly safe!"

I, too, felt that; but with the feeling of relaxation and pleasure came a natural youthful friskiness—the impulse of young life to start something. I had been passive so long that I wanted to make some sort of splash myself. I took the first thing that occurred to me—the idea suggested by Soldano's speech.

"Safe enough, I hope," said I with a forced laugh. "This Searing's place now—is it—I suppose there is no danger of any—do we run any risk of getting——"

"Of being arrested, you mean? Of course not," my companion interrupted. "This is no low dive. You will see men there that no cop would dare touch; and——"

"But I mean the Bad Men." I opened my eyes wide, to look frightened. "Will there be any—now—shooting?"

In the silence that followed I leaned back in my corner and subdued an inclination to chuckle.

"There will be some fellows just back from the Yukon, no doubt," Soldano finally forced a low disgusted tone. "They may be a bit hectic, but there is no danger to one who keeps his mouth shut."

"I'll keep mine shut," I announced with conviction.

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The light that flickered in through the cab windows showed the face at my side, pale and a bit sick. I felt a tweak of remorse for dampening his eager delight, for I knew Soldano's vividly sympathetic nature. Then I reflected that he had had a good long innings pouring wonders all the evening into my pricked-up ears. Moreover, he had gloated over that bank burglar business a long time, and I was tired of being the goat.

CHAPTER VI

THE MARQUIS INTERFERES

WE WERE rolling smoothly through the park, and the flitting light that came through the trees flashed into Soldano's corner once or twice. He was watching me askance with an expression of bewildered disgust that was eminently satisfactory.

Not another word was said on the way, and presently the cab stopped before what looked like an unoccupied private mansion overlooking the North River. In silence Soldano led the way up the steps and pushed a button. He turned toward the river while we waited.

I caught the reflection of a face in a mirror-lookout over the door, which opened softly and let us into a dim hallway. We climbed a flight of muffled stairs to a padded door that opened a crack.

"Got a card?" growled a hoarse voice.

Soldano passed it in and the door opened wide.

It was a long drawing-room, richly furnished and decorated, blue with cigar-smoke. On the left was the long roulette-table; along the opposite wall two tables and a sideboard with refreshments, liquid and solid.

Soldano marched past them, but I took a cigar and pushed into the crowd at the nearer or wheel-end of the table. He took a place near the foot.

Searing was at the wheel, and acted as his own croupier. He was a six-foot athlete of about thirty and looked younger. He was of the fair-haired, fresh-colored type that always attracted me by contrast. His bold, large-featured face, slightly tanned, flushed when he laughed from sheer keenness of feeling, and showed a set of strong white teeth. But the effect was not wholly pleasant. His eye-teeth were too well-marked and, with a lift of the upper lip, made his laugh somewhat sinister and wolfish.

Though I could not help warming to the full-blooded manhood of him, and felt the challenge in his deep flexible voice, something in him roused all my antagonism while, nevertheless, I felt I had known him a long time.

He saw me at once, and we exchanged a glance of understanding. He nodded sociably.

"H'are yeh, Doc?" said he. "Make yourself t'hum. Don't play if you don't want to. And if you want anything, just let out a holler."

As he spoke, he raked in and paid out chips with swift and unerring hands. I flushed as I saw the eyes of the crowd turned on me, and recognized the faces of a few men who were well known in the city. Searing started the ball on another roll, and went on:

"Spotted you on the street th'other day, Doc, and asked who you were—get your money down while she rolls, gentlemen—saw you weren't brought up in these smells. You're about my size, but I think I can lick you, Doc!"

He narrowed his cold blue eyes, that gave the lie to his warm welcome, and seemed to be sizing me up.

"You can't unless you can do the hundred under ten flat," I said, and turned to watch the play with a coolness that was all on the surface. This man had a strange power to irritate me, and I could not imagine why he had singled me out for his rough flattery—for that was plainly his intent.

Though the play was high and most of the players men of strong personality, things went on quietly and comfortably. There was no haggard despair, no fevered greed, none of the hackneyed accompaniments of the game. Nobody was impoverished, and the House was making money. It was rather monotonous.

"I've had enough," said a tall Californian, cashing in his chips. "I'm going to bed."

"Right you are, neighbor!" said Searing good-naturedly. "I'm almost asleep myself. Anybody want to play Old Maid or marbles?"

"In Sled Wheeler's place there was never a dull minute." It was a fat man, who was

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deliberately scattering a handful of chips on the separate numbers. "That's the time I got you!" as the ball clicked into 18. He raked in his pile and stroked it upward as he talked. "There was always something coming—it was in the air, and in the man. I'd rather lose in Wheeler's place than win in any other game I ever bucked. It was fun to have him take your money. He was the king of 'em all!"

"Wheeler!" Searing snorted, and I thought he slanted a look my way. "He's a has-was! He never was anything but a four-flusher, a Moll-buzzer and a —— ——!"

The words made my face sting as if he had slapped it.

"You're a liar!" was out before I could shut my teeth.

"*All* right, neighbor!" said Searing slowly, in the sudden hush. "Don't get peevish! Difference of opinion is what makes fights and hoss-races." He started the ball again before he drawled on:

"But out West we don't use that word unless we are annoyed!"

Something in the man's make-up or manner made me see red. I knew, from his reputation, it was suicide to go on, but I couldn't help it:

"Any man who says that about Dan Wheeler is a liar. And if he sits still to be called a liar he's a coward!"

"That's the talk!" Searing sang out gleefully. "I'm a comin', ma baby, I'm a comin'!"

PUTTING one hand on the table among the chips, he vaulted easily, came over the table like a bird—body erect and knees drawn up. The crowd drew away to give us room.

I dodged the left he drove straight at my face as he came down; and caught his arm. Aided by his momentum, I swung him heavily to the floor.

Rebounding like rubber, he came back; we each landed a left on the face and staggered. Coming together again, each led a left and ducked, swung over a right counter —stepping inside—and landed in a clinch.

He had the strength of a grizzly, and I was swung from my feet when we came to grips. I felt that I was against a better boxer and wrestler than I, and was feeling for his throat to break his hold. At the same time I was figuring that I was in for a thorough beating-up, for he was not the kind to do things by halves, when I saw a short figure leap toward us.

Some one barked two short words. They sounded like: "Hot! Drop!" There was the dull smack of fist on flesh; Searing went limp in my arms, and I fell across him as he slid to the floor.

I was pulled to my feet and men were swinging on my arms.

"Let me alone!" I swung loose savagely. "I don't want to hit him; who did that? Stand back and give him air!"

And I pushed the crowd apart, the professional instinct dominant.

"Take his shoulders, and we'll carry him into the card-room."

It was the little Japanese nobleman, who had appeared from somewhere and now quietly took command. We carried the relaxed body into a small adjoining room and laid it on a couch. Then the Marquis shut out all but Soldano and me.

Just as I was about to throw some water in Searing's face, he opened his eyes, sat up and grinned,

"Did you do that, Doc?"

"No. Somebody interrupted—lucky for me, I reckon."

"The Doctor is to be let alone," said the small Marquis pleasantly. "Don't make any mistake about that!"

With a comprehensive bow, he turned and left the room.

"Where'd that little sawed-off come from?" Searing scowled and got out his handkerchief. "—— that nose! It always did bleed. Who's your friend, Doc?"

When I had introduced Soldano, and they had shaken hands, Searing went on,

"I don't scare easy, but I reckon we'll have to adjourn that friendly little scrap, or I'll turn up missing. But, say, that was just a bait, Doc; and you bit something scand'lous!"

"What was a bait?" I asked.

"What I said about Wheeler. It was a lie; we all know he's the big noise, or used to be, but I wanted to find out if your friend in the Pen. was the great 'Sled' or not. So I made remarks about him. Say Doc! You got a punch in that left of yours. Will you shake?"

There was something big and boyish about the Westerner, and I could not resist his friendly advance. At the same time there was cold calculation in his

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rather near-set blue eyes that repelled me.

However, he openly protested that he was lonely in New York and that he had taken a liking to me at sight. He insisted on making an appointment to go to Coney Island with me the next day, and was hardly more than civil to Soldano. He showed us a way out, without going through the roulette room, and followed us to the door to say good night.

"Now you know the way, boys, don't be offish. See you to-morrow, Doc. Perhaps that little Japanese woodchuck will let us have some fun. Good night!"

As we were getting into the electric that was waiting, I said,

"He doesn't seem to stand much in awe of——"

"Sh!" Soldano hissed. "You notice he obeyed orders, just the same."

"And it would not be wise to follow his example," came from the inside of the cab. The Marquis was waiting patiently in there in the dark. "He has talked too much already. May I trouble you gentlemen to set me down at my hotel?"

I FOR one felt like a boy caught stealing apples, and hardly a word was said until we had left the little gentleman at the Holland House. In fact, Soldano seemed thoughtful all the way to his own rooms on Gramercy Park. There he dragged me inside and forced me into a chair. Then he shook a fist in my face:

"Too bad about your timidity, wasn't it? You didn't fool me more than a minute, though. Say, have you got any more dangerous chums up your sleeve? Bad men seem to take to you at sight. I told you you were holding out on me at the start—and you let *me* lecture *you* on the subject of Wheeler!"

"Speaking of holding out, you didn't tell me you were in love, either!" I answered.

He blinked at me and flushed slowly.

"You have associated with crooks too long—you're geared too high for me! Are you a mind-reader?"

"If I were, I should fail for lack of material. A man in love has nothing to read. Why, you infant, anybody could tell you that. When you were writing at the club you looked like a simpering idiot, and you get that dying-duck look in your eyes—who is she?"

"She'll be in town to-morrow." He tried to look cool. "And I'll make a bargain with you. You take me over to see Wheeler, and I'll introduce you to somebody."

"There is no telling what will happen to-morrow."

But, as I made my lonely way back to the Island in the small hours while all the city slept, I had no presentiment of how literally I had told the truth.

CHAPTER VII

WHEELER GOES UNDER

ACHING tired though I was, I did not go to my room, but climbed the long stairs to the Hospital, sure that Wheeler would be waiting up for me.

Yet I felt more than ever diffident about facing him; more than ever I wanted to help him in his unknown trouble, to make some small return for all he had done for me. It was not because I now knew that he had not only wealth and influence, but a power behind him. It was not because I wanted to be on the winning side. As the fat man at the roulette-table had said, it was in the man himself.

Though Searing undoubtedly had a sort of breezy magnetism and vital force, and had done his best to be agreeable at bottom, I had disliked him at sight. On the other hand, Wheeler had from the first been reserved and silent. He was a polished and perfect male animal; the quintessence of virility and the embodiment of all that makes man the greatest of predatory animals. And there was about the man a satiny, feline, *noli-me-tangere* fierceness that made approach difficult and dangerous. It was said men had come to a sudden and violent end because they had clapped him on the shoulder when he was not in the mood for familiarity. Yet for me he had had, from the first, a potent attraction; and his watchful, tactful protection of me had roused an affection almost filial. If a feud was on between him and the young Westerner, there was only one side for me.

The ward was dim and quiet. In the office Lawson slept in his chair beside the turned-down lamp, with a book in his lap. Dietmann lay on a cot outside, in his clothes and with his drug-box on the floor beside him. At the far end of the ward a light burned behind the screens that made Wheeler's improvised room.

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He put down a volume of my "Surgery," and looked up as I entered.

He saw my swollen lip, and his eyes flashed,

"Did Searing do that?"

"Yes. But you ought to see the nose on him."

He drew down his upper lip, and turned to put the book on the stand at his side.

"Who started it?"

"He said you were a has-been and—something else. I said he lied. He did. He'd have licked me in another minute, but a little Japanese——"

"But you fell for his game?" His brows drew straight together.

"Yes. I was easy."

"It makes no difference. He knew I was here—the Darcy gang let it out when we cleaned them out. But didn't Searing make up to you?"

"He did—wants me to go to Coney with him to-morrow."

"Do it. He'll turn himself inside-out." He was thinking. Suddenly he asked,

"How is the—your friend?" And I was startled by the change in his tone.

"Soldano? He's all right—or all wrong. He's in love!"

"The —— he is!"

I was sitting on the bed, and his quick ejaculation almost brought me up standing.

"Who is she?" he snapped.

"Didn't say—said he'd introduce me to-morrow if I would bring him over to see you. He knows all about you."

"He thinks he does."

Again he was thinking, and hard. Something had disturbed him and he got up to pace up and down beside the bed. Four times he passed me, then turned on me a face as hard and merciless as flint.

"If there's a woman in it, there's no other way—I've got to use you. Are you 'easy' for women?"

"No easier than the next man, I reckon. But I'm not bragging. I've got my fingers crossed and I'm engaged."

"You want to knock wood and wear a rabbit's foot," he said gravely. "There's no time to spare, and you are going to get mighty little sleep to-night."

He drew a long breath and looked like a man in pain. He looked in my eyes sharply.

"How's your nerve? Spread out your fingers."

I held out a spread hand, back upward, and the fingers did not quiver.

"Good stuff!" he commented. "That's New England stock, off the farm." His face was more content. "You'd better go to your room and try to sleep an hour or two. But be ready to come up in a hurry."

I felt his appraising look as I said good night and left. But I turned at the screen. He stood looking down at his bed, and his face was grim.

IT SEEMED as if I had hardly lost consciousness, lying partially clothed on my bed, when the speaking-tube screeched its whistle in my ear.

"Doctor, can you come right up?" It was Lawson's frightened voice. "It's Wheeler—he's taken mighty bad—seems to be in a lot of pain——"

But I was already scrambling into my clothes, and I took the stairs on a run. The ward was roused and stirring with sleepy chaos.

As soon as I entered the door, the big striped bulk of "The Professor"—my Falstaffian drug-orderly—got in my way. For his ponderous shell held the heart of a child, and Wheeler was the terrifying center of his universe.

"Dan's got fulminating appendicitis!" he whimpered, as he trotted heavily by my side. "There are no dressings sterilised, Riley's gone—we can't get Dr. Edson! What'll we do? We couldn't get ready for an operation before noon. Then it'll be a pus case. What'll we do?"

"Oh, shut up!" I snapped, for it was all true. "Wait until we see. Walsh, what's his temperature?"

At Wheeler's bedside, Walsh was just taking the thermometer from his lips. It read 104°. The abdominal muscles were taut and sensitive; Wheeler ground his teeth silently in a paroxysm. When it passed, he frowned at the pale-faced circle,

"Clear out!" said he hoarsely. Then, to me, "It means the knife, what? And quick?"

"The sooner the better," I assented.

"Then roll up your sleeves and go to it! I've got to be on my feet next Tuesday!"

"Perhaps I can get Edson—or——"

"I don't want him. You are going to do it!"

"But I've no assistant, and no safe dressings, as it happens."

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"Couldn't you get that girl at the City Hospital—the beauty in the operating-room?"

"You've hit it! Walsh, get the room ready! Have lots of boiled water, hot and cold."

And I was off down the stairs on the run.

The City Hospital was a stone's-throw from the Penitentiary. The only chance I had to get things ready for an early operation was to get Miss Alden to help me. Wheeler had heard me tell about her, the most beautiful as well as the most skilful surgical nurse in all Greater New York, she was worshipped and feared at a distance by half the internes in the city. But she was a man-hater and, perhaps because I was not in love with her, she had showed me frank and open favor.

If I could persuade her to break the rules of the Department of C. & C., she could make it easy for me to operate under the best conditions; and she was far and away the best assistant anywhere, an artist at sterile technique. With her help, I would ask no odds of the best specialist. It was rather a forlorn hope, but it was the only way out.

By reason of a personal pull with Joe the Janitor, I was soon pleading at the crack of her bedroom door, and I put my heart into word-pictures. I told her what Wheeler had done for me, what I would do for him, and gave her a brief summary of his symptoms. Toward the last I heard a soft rustling, as if she were getting into bed, and my hopes dropped.

"I know it's too much to ask you to go over into that bunch of crooks, but if you could only let me have a set of dressings—an emergency outfit——"

"Drag Dr. Allen out of bed," a sweet voice near the door interrupted me, "and get him to start the ether at once. I'm almost dressed, and I'll have everything ready. Tell Mrs. Sullivan to let me in through the women's side."

"He's just gone. *Bless* your heart!"

"Do you want me at the irrigator, or as first assistant?"

"Both, of course. I want the best assistant I can get for this."

"Oh, thanks!" with a lilt of delight. "Everything will be ready as soon as you are. Better hurry; I know the way up."

I could hear that "thanks" all the way back. I told Wheeler.

"Just as if I were not dragging her out of her bed in the shivery small hours, to break the rules of the Department and come up into this menagerie—you'd think I had asked her to go to the Opera!"

I was scrubbing up as I talked, and Wheeler on the wheel-litter looked like a man on his bier. For a breath there was no sound in the little anesthetizing-room but the slush of suds.

"Now you—hear—me," Wheeler said huskily, "that girl will never be sorry!"

And to this day, unless Helen Alden Cantrell has read "Cupid and the Crook," she doesn't know that she owes her life's happiness to Sled Wheeler. Her famous husband has asked me often why I named their first-born Dan.

WHEN Allen was ready to start the ether, I stepped to Wheeler's side.

"Feel all right?" I asked foolishly.

The terrifying green eyes sought mine.

"Doctor, could you put on rubber gloves and start the stuff—just until I am off?" he asked. "I have tackled some stiff propositions, but this lying on your back and throwing up both hands sort of gets next to me!"

"Why certainly. Allen, will you see if Miss Alden wants any help?"

And there, alone with me in that little room, I verily believe this man—afraid of nothing above or below ground—met his supreme test of courage. At such moments the man shows through the thickest veneer of training.

He took his ether with a simple, trusting obedience, breathing deep and slowly. At the stage of struggling and delirium he only tightened his splendid muscles, held them tense while a slow flush covered his whole body; then slowly, very slowly relaxed, and slept like a baby.

That operation was a beauty, if I must say it. Poor work with such an assistant was impossible, and I was on my mettle. Moreover, I had no false pride. I knew that the girl at my side, marvelously deft and silent, knew more about the actual technique of that one operation than any one surgeon; for she had helped all the best of them; and I should not hesitate to ask her advice in a tight place.

But it was a model case, taken so early that everything was normal, and the work went smoothly and swiftly. My lovely as-

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sistant had every want supplied in advance; her every movement was an inspiration, and I was proud of the result. I used the method of closure that Wheeler had admired, and as I was tying the last suture, Miss Alden spoke for the first time aloud:

"Very pretty. The man could almost walk in a week, if you would let him."

Flustered by praise from such a high source, I could only blush. I even forgot to thank her when she went. It would have been fine irony to attempt it, anyhow. Thanks don't fill the bill. But it is good to think she is one noble woman who did not have to wait for her reward in the dark Beyond.

When Wheeler was back in his bed, the sky was getting gray over Brooklyn. And as I started for my room for a nap and a bath, I met for the first time Frank Howe, the hero of a hundred fires and a son of an old prison-keeper. He had come to relieve Lawson, for his first day of duty as substitute for Riley; and Lawson introduced me.

Howe was a quiet, homelike fellow—one you felt you had always known. As I looked into his clear gray eyes and heard his low modest voice, I not only felt that he was kind and gentle to the bottom of his brave heart, but somehow I felt a tug of homesickness for the green hills and quiet woods.

"I have heard a lot about the Doctor," he said. "My father thinks there is no other."

"And everybody has heard a lot about you," I answered; "but you look just like an ordinary man."

"Then I'm sorry for the ordinary man."

And he blushed like a girl, way into his prematurely gray hair. I went to my room, looking forward to a chance to get acquainted with him in the next seven days of his stay.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHANGE OF QUARTERS

THAT week, however, proved to be one of the most different weeks I ever passed; different from what I had expected, different from anything in my experience, almost outside human possibility. That is why I am spoiling good paper. A full record of the five days following the one just chronicled would be more than the gentle reader and ungentle editor would stand for; but the manner in which the scene shifts from the hospital in the attic of the old Penitentiary to the hustling purlieus of Manhattan—what I am trying to say is, that I will try to cut it short from where I left off to the "Open Night" the next Tuesday. The first surprise came early the next (Friday) morning.

Having slept late, it was almost noon when I went up to the hospital to make morning rounds.

Howe was waiting for me, and he looked troubled as he asked me to step into the office.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Wheeler worse?"

"No. He's all right as far as his—his wound is concerned. But I have to ask you to stay away for a few days—" he got it out with an effort, and hurried on—"to leave right now—this minute—and go to the Post-clinic where you will be on the staff for five days, substituting for your old friend Mac! The Dep. has made all arrangements with the Commissioner so you can go right now; and Dr. Allen will see to your patients here. You can come back after Tuesday—you know. Do you understand? I am not giving orders; it is a message to you I am obliged to deliver, and I hope you won't make any mistake——" He was so apologetic that I tried to help him out.

"I understand, I think. It is an order from the——"

"Sh-h! For the present we will say that Wheeler doesn't want to see you around for a few days."

Though his eyes seemed to be pleading with me not to be offended, I began to stiffen.

"Very well, he won't see me."

And I was going to march out, but I waited to say,

"I have some books here. If you will please——"

"Don't make any mistake, Doctor! Wait a few days before you make any move except what I have—suggested. Won't you do that, for Dan? Remember what he has done, and remember how he was looking forward to getting out, and to landing that man Searing! Can you blame him for being disappointed, and for not wanting to see anything like a doctor, now he is laid up for ten days?"

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"Then it's his disappointment?" I hesitated.

"See here, Doctor!" he looked into my face with those clear, kindly eyes. "Won't you take my word for it that it will be all right after Tuesday, and that Dan needs your help *now?*"

"If it will do him any good, I will."

"Shake on it! And see the Dep. as you go down."

I took his hand and left, somewhat reassured but sore. There was no sign from behind the screens at the far end of the ward.

THE Deputy Warden was in his office, brisk and busy as ever. He sent out his two striped clerks that he might talk to me alone.

"Sorry to lose you for a few days, Doc, but you'll be back Wednesday."

"I don't know about that."

"What's up?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I do. Howe is such a conscientious cuss that he can't tell more than half the truth, for fear he'll tell a little more. Now you hear me! You go over there and take Mac's place for a few days—we've got it all fixed up—and have a good time. You'll have dandy quarters, and plenty of time off. After Tuesday night, if things aren't all right I'll buy you a block on Broadway." He leaned forward to tap me on the chest, "There's a hen on! Don't spoil Dan's game!"

"Tell me one thing. Is there any real reason for this mix-up, and will it do anybody any good?"

"There are a dozen reasons, and it will help more besides Dan!"

And I went to pack a suit-case, convinced but feeling as if I had been asked to resign. At intervals, while I moved into my new quarters in the elegant new hospital, I indulged in moments of self-pity, but they were finally forgotten when I went with Soldano to the train to meet his girl.

Now this is no love-story, though love surely took a hand. More than one man has laid his plans—for a book or a life—to do without love. How many have made good? The chubby bowman has a way of intruding unasked, and, once in——

Her name, a misfit, was Sue Jackson. Now to try to put a woman on paper is an oft-tried mistake. Even on canvas she lacks the greater part of the power that makes the strong man weak and robs the wise of his wisdom.

And that power was what Sue Jackson had, to a degree unsurpassed among all the women I have seen. To conform to custom we may note that she was dark because he was light, but not too dark. Her eyes were a warm red-brown under her dark lashes and black brows. Top that with bronze hair, a skin of blended snow, cream and rose, and you have a picture as much like the real living girl as Cleopatra's stone caricatures are like the beguiling Serpent of the Nile.

When you looked in her eyes and she smiled, you felt that the elevator had dropped too suddenly, and at the touch of her firm little hand the too solid earth withdrew beneath you. This is not an attempt to write a poem, but a record of actual sensations.

When I got back to my room in the Post-clinic I had forgotten my lunch. I had given up all hope of Soldano; he would be useless as long as she was within reach, and I couldn't blame him. Yet I was vaguely dissatisfied. That girl was beautiful, too much so, and a fellow couldn't look at her and keep his head—not for long. Moreover, something in the steady glow of her glance, in the slow languor of her grace, reminded one of sensuous intrigue and medieval daggers, of too-sweet orchids——

I had got to that point in my reflections, sitting on the edge of my bed, when there was a heavy knock at my door.

CHAPTER IX

AN EVENING WITH SEARING

IT WAS Searing, come to keep his appointment to go to Coney Island. With his six-feet-two of clean bone and muscle, his lean, large-featured face aglow with health and vigor, he was an eyeful as he stood in the door and grinned. Although he was tailored to the New York minute, he brought a breeze from the Plains, and showed all his white teeth in welcome.

"Well Doc, let me in?" he asked cheerily.

"Sure, this chair will hold you. I broke the other. Sit down. Is your nose sore?"

He stroked that feature and looked up at me under overhanging brows, while his face slowly reddened with suppressed laughter.

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"Doc, I eat 'em raw as a face-reader! I nailed you at sight, and I never miss. But what d'you think of your friend Wheeler *now?*"

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't he get hot because you told him he'd have to stay in bed a few days, and give you the G. B.?"

"I operated on him, and said he'd have to keep his bed a week or so, but I don't know that he got mad about that," I said coolly. "I owe him my life a couple of times, anyhow; and he was banking on getting out Wednesday. I don't blame him for feeling sore."

"Shake, pardner!" He caught my hand in a crushing grip. "We shall get along." He suddenly became keen and sober. "What did you think of the girl?"

"I don't blame Soldano—she'd drive any man wild."

"Then don't let me see her, unless you want him cut out. They can't resist me. D'you believe it?"

"They say she comes of fine Kentucky family," I said innocently.

Again he lowered his head and reddened with inward amusement; his jaw-muscles rippled under the fine brown skin while he covered his mouth with his hand.

"What tickles you now?" I asked.

"Doc, you suit me down to the ground. We are going to get acquainted. Now I suppose your friend is useless for the present, so it's you and me for Coney, what? We'll rip 'er up the back and see the wheels go round! Are you on?"

And he rose, boyishly impatient to be off.

"Get your lid, life's short!" he called.

"Wait a minute; you must count me out on any tank act," I objected. "Not that I'm an abstainer, but——"

"Now see here, Dad—" thus he christened me on the spot, and never afterward called me anything else—"don't make any mistake. I've told you I was lonesome, looking for some one to play with, and I liked the broad-gage look of you. Now I wasn't born on Beacon Street or Fifth Avenue, but I walk on two legs most all the time, there's no hairy pelt under my shirt, and when I'm all lit up in my black monkey-clothes you can hardly tell me from a gentleman.

"But we are no Siamese twins, Dad, and if you say the word I'll not be visible to the naked eye more than a half a second. How is it?"

"The water ought to be fine."

I put on my hat, and we started. But he stopped me in the lower hall.

"Where's the phone?" he asked.

I showed him, and he called up some one at the Imperial. He made no mystery of his intention, but openly announced that he had decided to stay in town and conduct the great Open Night. When we were going down the steps he was in high feather.

"If Wheeler's laid up it means money in my purse, Dad. I was going to sail for Cherbourg Tuesday, but now I stay for the Open Night."

"I thought he was a back number—in his dotage."

"I was talking for publication, then, Dad. My friends tell me I can do him at any game, and I reckon he *has* failed fast. But between us, I'm not so dead stuck on myself. Dan Wheeler is no cinch for any man, and he has good reason to shoot on sight. I believe I can beat him at poker, and God help him if I get my two hands on him, but he has a way of handing the other fellow the worst of it, so I wasn't taking any chances. I have a bunch of money and I want the fun of spending it myself—see?"

"But how could he get at you? His time isn't out until Wednesday next."

"I'm no chicken, Dad; I have kept hep to his moves, and I know he could work his pull and get out Tuesday night if he wanted to. So I had planned to put the Atlantic between us—was going to sail Tuesday morning. I'd look real sweet trying to run an Open Night, if he should blow in and make me look like a deuce in a dirty deck, now wouldn't I?

"But with Sled laid up, Willie wins in a walk, and it means another cartload of kale, Dad! We buy Gay Paree for a pleasure-park and push Monte Carlo off the map, while me brave Danny holds the bag! There's no fake about this operation is there, Dad?"

"There is not; I did it myself."

"And much thanks you get, what? Don't you care, Dad; we play old Coney from pickles to tooth-picks and show the ginks how to shoot and swim! Follow me, and you'll wear the smile that won't come off."

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SOMETHING certainly had happened to please him. He was a boy out of school. It was before the day of Luna Park and such, but we rode everything we could climb on and tried everything once. Searing soon had a crowd trailing after us, of all ages and both sexes, and they approved most unanimously.

He could shoot. He could shoot anything that would go off. At each shooting-gallery we blocked the street. After a few shots to get his weapon sighted, he could hit anything he could see, fixed or moving, and proceeded to shoot the place to a standstill. Even the police opened their mouths.

Then he ballyhooed for the girl-shows, sold pop-corn and peanuts until he had a dozen offers of permanent jobs, and wound up with a swimming exhibition I have never seen beaten in the surf. On the boat going home in the dusk he sang in a full baritone to a big audience, danced Mobile-buck, sand and soft-shoe clogs, waltzed a dozen pretty girls clean off their feet and dead in love with him, winding up with the natural result—a lovely rough-house mix-up.

We were in my room at the Post-clinic, after he had jollied and bribed two policemen to let us go, and I was reducing a black-eye with hot water.

"I tell you what, Dad. This is the first day of real rest I have had. I begin to like New York, and I guess I'll get well after all. Wish I had found you before; you're appointed physician to his Majesty, Me! How do you like the goin'?"

"All right, when I can see out of both eyes. I think this is going to be a pippin to-morrow."

I looked in the mirror with concern. No one could fail to be entertained by such a whirlwind.

"To-morrow!" He sat down on my bed, and over his face came a cloud so somber that I gazed at him astounded. "Take my advice, Dad, and forget to-morrow. If you don't, you lose your nerve. To-morrow you pay for yesterday's mistakes. To-day is the only day to live in."

"But when you've made the mistakes, and to-day is to-morrow?"

"It's —— all right!" he assented. "Say, are you afraid to speak about this fool Order? I believe it's nothing but a bluff to scare boobs, and I've yet to meet the man or the thing I'm afraid of! This is a free country and I say what I please as long as my face will work. If I were one of the scary kind, they'd have me dead of fright by now."

There was something pathetic and hunted in the look he gave me. He gave me no chance to answer, and I fancied that in the reaction from his gaiety he had almost lost control of his powerful emotional nature. For he got up and forced a laugh.

"We die but once, Dad, and we're dead a long time. So why hunt trouble? Good night and happy dreams!"

He went down the echoing hall, whistling the Dead March, and left me pondering the sudden change in him.

CHAPTER X

PREPARATIONS

JUST when I was ready for bed and about to turn off the light, there was another knock at the door. It was Howe; he came in and closed the door softly.

"You have done well, Doctor. Keep it up. Searing seems to have taken a real fancy to you, though of course he has a reason. What do you think of him?"

"I don't know; he's a mixture."

"Most of us are. But at the bottom he's a bad one; you can be sure of that."

"How is Wheeler?"

"Wait, I'm coming to that. That is what I came for. I want to tell you how things stand." He took the chair I offered and looked at me with trouble in his straightforward face. "This Searing has done Dan one dirty trick—as dirty as any man can do—and has kept out of his way ever since. Dan was hoping to get at him before he left New York, and that was why he asked me to take Riley's place for this week, so he could be sure nothing about himself would leak out of the Pen. Hospital.

Dan had set his heart on getting at Searing this time, to square accounts with him and to stop his blowing and lying. But that wasn't the only reason. There were two others. One of them I can't tell you now; but the other one was on account of your friend Soldano. Searing is foxy, and he hasn't tried to get in with your friend yet; but you mark my words, he has got his eye on him! That's why he is making up to you—understand?"

"Yes. But what is he after—Soldano's money?"

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"Yes, his money, and something else. Your part is to keep watch of them both as well as you can, and to see they are kept apart until next Tuesday."

"Well, I'll do my best. But about Wheeler?"

"That isn't so simple." He frowned in perplexity. "You can see how he feels, to be laid out on his back just now when so much depended on his being out Tuesday. It's enough to make any man wild, and Dan isn't patient—never was—" He paused and looked at me as if he had something disagreeable to tell.

"Well?" I prompted impatiently.

"Dan won't have the word 'Doctor' mentioned in hearing. He threw a glass at Dr. Allen to-day, and won't let him even take his temperature. Dr. Allen says he'll fret himself into a fever in three days. I am the only man he wants around. He's as cross as two sticks!"

Howe got it out in a hurry, and looked relieved. After thinking it over, I could make nothing of the situation but a puzzle.

"It looks mighty mixed to me; what's to be done about it?" I asked.

"We've got to do the best we can, until Dan is able to get out—if he ever is."

He looked away from me as he said it, and I felt a sinking at my stomach.

"Do you mean you think he is in danger—that he will die?"

"Die? No! Not from his illness or operation. But I am afraid he will not be in shape to tackle Searing when he does get out. That big beast would give his soul for a chance to do up Dan; and if he can get at him when he's half sick—but there's no use talking about it! I have got something to tell you. You've seen the girl your friend is in love with?"

"Yes, and you can't blame him. She would floor any man, but——"

"But what?"

"But I'm glad I'm not in love with her. I'm thinking he is forgetting his ambition and everything else now she is here. How is he mixed up in this thing anyhow?" I propounded suddenly. "I can't see head or tail to it!"

"No wonder," he said with quiet kindness. "Don't worry about it, though that's a fool thing to say, and that brings me to what I had to tell you. I can't tell you now what is up, but you'll know before many days. All I can say is this: Keep an eye on Searing, Soldano and this girl, and let me know if you see anything new. Don't try to fool Searing; he's even deeper than he looks. And if he asks about Dan, tell him what I have told you. Don't try to get anything out of him; but keep your ears open for what he says. I'll try to see you every day. *That's* the only thing he mustn't know! He must think you and Wheeler are at outs." He got up, much easier in mind. "And remember this: I'll bet my eye-teeth we come out all right! Good night!"

He left me with the impression that there was a complicated plot in the course of development, but in spite of my doubts and confusion I shared his hopeful outlook. I had seen Wheeler in a tight place twice before; mixed-up and difficult situations were his best hold.

FOR four days there was no movement in a dramatic sense. My forenoons were spent in the Post-clinic, afternoons with Searing, and evenings with Soldano.

Searing and I had an afternoon in a sloop on the river, one on the Palisades, one slumming, and one with a colony of his actor friends on the Sound beach.

The attitude of these sophisticated friends of his confirmed Howe's opinion of the puzzling Westerner. They treated him with a sort of admiring deference that looked like fear. At supper I sat near a plump, outspoken lady whose name appears in feet-high letters on posters, and who took a kindly interest in me.

"Why is Jim Searing trailing round with you?" she murmured with eyes on her plate. "You got money?"

"No. Why?"

"That's what I said—why? Don't look at me. He's a fiend! If I were you, I'd have masses said for my soul! Got a friend who has money?"

"You've hit it!"

"Then kill him, and put him out of his misery before Jim gets him!"

She had no chance to say more; for Searing pounced on her boisterously at this point, declaring he felt it in his bones she was lying about him. He made her look "at the whites of his eyes" until she rushed off to her room in hysterics.

For all the strong strain of the beast in him, he compelled admiration from all with

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whom he came in contact, and I was no exception. His was a forceful personality, big if sinister, breezy and ever unexpected. But I could not get rid of the notion that he was hunted, and that his forced flow of spirits was a means of escape from himself and from reflection. Though in a way I enjoyed his entertainment, never lacking in strength or flavor, I felt always hanging over us a chill dark cloud rising out of his past; and I looked forward to the end of our intimacy with increasing eagerness. At the same time I became each day more fearful of the outcome, as I became more and more aware of his power and subtlety.

All this time he seemed rather to avoid Soldano. One evening Soldano and I spent in his roulette place and he counseled us not to play, saying he did not want to get us "down on" him. So far as I remember, that was the only time he spoke to my classmate directly before the big Open Night. When I reported this to Howe on his clandestine nightly visit, he only nodded and told me to watch the love-affair.

It was a needless order. Soldano went in with all his headlong nature and confided in me with all open-hearted candor. The girl would not see him evenings, by orders of her companion and chaperon, her aunt. So his next-best course was to spend his evenings telling me about her.

And it was a beautiful first-love he gave her—a love to make any woman fine and sweet—any woman who could appreciate it, that is. The things he told will not down, on paper, and I'd not write them if I could. The whole love of a clean boy is one of the things that powerfully lifts the average of this old world, the world that, 'tis so truly said, "is so full of a number of things." He was hard hit, for the first time. And every day he was worse than the day before by a geometrical progression.

Although I could not see any harm in it, except that he was forgetting everything else, I felt as if I were watching a man being swept over Niagara. I could only stand by helpless.

TWICE I saw him and the girl together, and she seemed to understand not only him but me—the whole situation. She gave me such a smile of sweet and wise appreciation that I was only saved from blurting out the whole of my fears by the certainty that it would be disloyal to Soldano. She was a woman, and he was a boy, in love, a very lovable and wholly insane youth afire with the selfless egoism of his first great passion.

Monday night came the explosion.

He came to me, his eyes all pupil, his face pale and uplifted. Without answering my greeting, he came to where I stood tying my cravat before my mirror, and laid a hand lightly on my shoulder.

"Corbin, I think I see a way!"

Even his voice was richly vibrant with triumph, and love of every created thing.

"A way?" I turned to face him. "I hope you do, for you seem to want it. But a way to what?"

"A way to everything in the world worth having!" he answered with tremulous eagerness.

With a shock I realized that it was a crisis, that he was overwrought, ecstatic.

"Well," said I awkwardly, "sit down and tell me about it."

He sat down on the edge of the bed—he didn't know whether it was a bed or a park bench—and went on:

"You know I found out long ago—or was it yesterday?—that there was only one thing to do. And to-day I told her." He drew a long catchy breath. "I had seen before that there was some obstacle, and I asked her if there was another man. There isn't; that is, she doesn't care for any other, in that way. But she thinks everything of her father, and her father has picked another man, with money."

He paused, and I muttered inanely, "They often do."

"But I talked to the aunt—" he seemed not to have heard as he continued—"and she told me plainly that she thought her brother, the—the girl's father, would be angry if the girl married a poor man; but that he would come around all right, if the man had enough to make her a home as good as she had been used to. Now the father will be in New York the day after to-morrow to take the girl home. By that time we shall be—married!" The last word was a breathy whisper.

"*What?*" I half rose from my chair. "You haven't—you won't——"

"Wait!" He stopped me. "If I had just twice the ready money that I have—the money that was transferred to me to-day—I know the old gentleman would not think I was a selfish beast to take her; and

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I don't want her to be sorry afterward. So I am going to double that money at Searing's table. I've got it in cash!"

"Not to-night?" I almost shouted.

"No, to-morrow night—the Open Night, when there's no limit."

"Have you told her? Is she willing? Does she consent?"

"I told her what I was going to do. I didn't ask her for any promise, but I told her that when I was in a position to ask her to come to me without losing her father, I should——"

"What did she say?"

"She—Corbin, she cried!"

The reverent awe in his tone told me it was the first time this great thing had come to him.

"And she made me promise I would talk to you about it first." He still spoke in a whisper; still he was seeing her as she looked when she said it. "She has sense, a lot more sense than I have, and she is just the same age." Then all at once he became conscious of my existence, and his eyes flashed with something of his natural boyish delight. "But I didn't promise to take your advice! So you can save your breath if you don't approve. You said yourself you thought Searing ran a square game."

I didn't waste any breath. But I made him promise to stay with me that night, and to let me put the money in the safe of the Superintendent down in the office, for he had it—a packet of big bills—in his breast-pocket.

I managed to keep him in my room, by letting him talk. When it was about time for Howe's nightly visit I took the packet of bills and, while Soldano was undressing, I went to the Superintendent's office. There I saw the money safely locked up, and waited in the hall to intercept Howe.

He was punctual to the second. He surprised me by his reception of the news.

"It couldn't be better!" He clapped me on the shoulder. "You have done your part beautifully. Just hold on to your friend until eleven o'clock to-morrow night; don't let him start before that, then go with him to Searing's place. If you can get a good man—some man you know well—to go with you, so much the better. But go with him at eleven or after, and leave the rest to us!"

"Who is going to help?"

"Wait and see. Somebody you never have seen. You will see something you never will forget!"

He was glowing with confidence, more excited than I had ever seen him, and I never had realized how big and strong he was.

Just before leaving he repeated his directions, and added that I need not worry.

"We shall have a man there almost as good as Dan at his best," were his last words, and he left me to puzzle over them.

CHAPTER XI

THE OPEN NIGHT

THE long room was paneled in dull green and white, and lighted by a diffused glow from the ceiling. Around the roulette-table were perhaps thirty men, and not one was a typical New Yorker. They were a far-gathered lot, of strong and diverse personalities. A few of them were masked, a few were plainly onlookers; but the greater number were alert, tight-lipped men who knew what they wanted and wanted it hard. It was a quiet, soft-voiced crowd of men, of the predatory variety; men who had survived because they were quick and keen, fearless and merciless.

Although there was no noise or demonstration, there was an atmosphere of tense expectancy. The play had been big and, since the evening was no longer young, there were a few pale and haggard faces round the table; a few had drawn out to sit at small tables and rest their heads in their hands. The winners were still playing, for that is the way the game gets you.

Searing was flushed and uneasy; he looked like a man who had climbed high and feared a fall, for in the small satchel at his elbow was a fortune in six figures. When he saw us he nodded shortly and turned again to his watchful task.

Just then a great and glorious figure of a man separated itself from the group round the table and bore down on us, beaming.

"Mister—pardon me—Doctor Corbin!" My hand was caught in the gentle steel of his grip. "I'm mighty glad to see you again! You are here to see the show, I suppose, as I am?"

"Why, Jeff!" I was keenly delighted to meet my old pupil. "Let me introduce a classmate, Soldano."

"Nobody needs an introduction to Jeff Howard," said Soldano giving the big fel-

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low one of his glistening grins. "If we had only had you in our day, Howard, Yale never could have put it all over us as she did."

It was true that the boys on the streets knew the strapping guard, of the Harvard and All-America teams, but there were only a few of us who knew him well, who knew the true and tender heart of this modern Bayard. He was too pure and sweet a spirit, too knightly a gentleman for this smirched old planet in our day. So next year he was taken back where he belonged, leaving a dark cairn in our hearts, haunted by rich melodies.

That night, however, he was a warm delight to our eyes as he glowed his honest and deferential welcome to two old Harvard men. He and Soldano exchanged heart-to-heart grins, and straightway knew each other like brothers.

Until that moment I had not recalled Howe's instructions to bring a friend I could trust. It was the very stanch loyalty of the big thoroughbred that reminded me of it now.

We drew near the table, and Howard bent down to our puny six-feet to whisper,

"By the way, can you tell me, who is the quiet little man with the slick black hair—the one at the far end?"

"That," Soldano pulled us together on each side to answer, "is 'Demon Daly.' He is the partner of the great gambler, Sled Wheeler."

"Really?" said Howard eagerly. "They have been talking about that man, Wheeler. He's the man who started these Open Nights, and he must be a king among gamblers. They speak his name in whispers. I'd give anything to meet him!"

"That's what I'm living for," said Soldano.

The words brought back to him the business of the evening. His face set in pale determination, he got out his bank-notes and bought a pile of chips that attracted notice even in that company of plungers.

"What is he going to do?" Howard whispered to me, following his new friend with eyes that always reminded me of those of a setter—humans don't class with them for devotion.

"He's going to lose his last dollar or double it," I answered. "Girl in the case. I want you to promise to stick around tonight and look out for him. I can't explain; but we may need you."

"Certainly; delighted! Thanks!" And the strong, gentle face lighted with the joy of battle. He pushed to Soldano's side to murmur, "Good luck, old man!"

Soldano turned to meet his sincere look and both men flushed.

His first bet was on the red and he won. Thereafter he stuck to the Harvard color and staked heavily; so heavily that soon all but Daly pulled out to watch the big game.

DALY steadily played the black, and kept his stakes just under those of Soldano. Back and forth it went win and lose, and at the end of a half-hour Soldano's chips were more than half gone while Daly had won almost as much. The game was certainly going against the heavier player, on the colors, and the O and OO came up rather too often for mathematical chance.

Suddenly Daly looked up at Soldano, caught his eye unseen by Searing, and shook his head. On the next roll neither placed any chips.

Searing had seemed to be pleasantly dreaming, perhaps spending his winnings in Paris or Monte Carlo, for there is no mark so easy as the professional gambler when he is flush. Now he started and sat up,

"What's wrong, men?" His bluff geniality was forced.

"Searing!" Daly spoke for the first time, and his voice was very low and pleasant. "I don't like your game since this man began to play."

He nodded toward Soldano, but kept his eyes on the Westerner.

"Perhaps you mean the game is crooked!"

Searing looked dangerous; his blue eyes had an ugly light.

"It looks suspicious," Daly assented gently. "You claim you can play poker, I believe; and, since this is an Open Night, you are obliged to accept a challenge. How about it?"

"You have said it." Searing bent a threatening look at the smaller man. "Come across!"

"Are you game to play for your pile and your plant?"

Though he spoke in a tone hardly more than a whisper, it sent a start through the breathless crowd.

"See here, neighbor—" Searing reddened

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and clenched one hand—"if you are trying to insult me, why not put in the Black Chip?"

There was a hush in which I heard Howard murmur to himself, "By George! This is what you read about!"

Every man present knew that it was a challenge to the death, and there was tragedy in the air.

"That is just what I want, to challenge you to play three to five jack-pots with a euchre-deck—all out below the sevens—for what you've got. Black Chip at the bottom. But I am challenging for another man. I am not going to play the hands."

"Who is? That?"

Searing snarled and tossed a contemptuous thumb toward Soldano. Under the stress of danger and excitement he showed his hate.

All eyes centered on Soldano's rather pale and harried face.

"No!" Daly rose dramatically. "There's the man you're going to face—Sled Wheeler!"

A start went through the crowd like an electric shock, and we turned where Daly pointed.

In the space between us and the door stood a white-haired gentleman, dignified and graceful, with an air of well-groomed and restrained elegance that made every other man present seem dingy by comparison.

"Dan! Dan Wheeler!"

A few distinguished-looking men started forward with eager welcome, and were struck motionless by one word:

"Gentlemen!"

Spoken in a low, warning tone, accompanied by a haughty lift of the head and a glance from the long greenish eyes, it froze the welcome on every lip. One man turned to me in a daze and murmured,

"He's insane! He doesn't know me!"

Another answered him, "Yes—there's something the matter—and he has aged twenty years!"

NO LESS shocked, I was noting the marvelous change in the great man. Though the eyes gleamed with the old power, there were dark hollows below them, dark hollows in the cheeks and between the bones of the hand now raised in a slight imperious gesture.

"Daly!"

The little man came forward, keenly observant and solicitous.

"But Dan," he whispered, "are you sure you'd better? You need all your nerve and you're not——"

"See to the arrangements, Daly." He waved him back and turned to the rest: "Gentlemen, I ask you to pardon me for interrupting your game for a few moments. It will be for only a very few minutes. Then my partner, Mr. Daly, will take over the place and continue to entertain you. May I trouble some one of the gentlemen for a chair?"

I placed a chair at his side; at the same time Searing came forward with a show of hospitality.

"Sure! Sit down; you need a rest!"

I think every man present shared with me the feeling that the traditional bull had rushed into a china-shop, so harsh was the contrast between the Westerner's awkward insincerity and the graceful restraint of the older man. Despite all the signs of age, the finished personality and magnetism of Wheeler had already erased Searing's presence completely, when he thus roughly obtruded.

Wheeler seemed not to see or hear him, but dropped into the chair I had placed with a quiet,

"Thanks."

He rested his elbows on his knees and dropped his head in his hands. So he sat while the preparations for the game were finished.

Searing turned red, scowled, stood eagerly sizing up the bowed figure before him; and as he noted the trembling wrists and the hands dark-lined with hollows, his lips drew up with a snarling smile of exultation. He flashed a look of triumph round the crowd.

"It's a shame!" Howard growled in my ear. "It ought to be stopped; the old gentleman is ill, and that big bounder has no bowels!"

He took no pains to lower his voice, and Searing may have heard him. But just then there was a call, rising clear and crisp above the murmurs of the crowd:

"Ready, gentlemen!"

It was the little Marquis, who had appeared from nowhere as usual, and now sat at the end of a narrow table in the middle of the room, to deal for both and to act as referee.

The stage was set and the play ready to begin.

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CHAPTER XII

BLACK CHIP POKER

THE table was the cross-bar of a letter H, the sides of which were ropes stretched on uprights. The spectators, outside the ropes, could not see the hands of the players nor betray them in any way. When the two men sat on opposite sides of the table, the little Japanese announced the rules; while we were obliged to use football tactics to get good places near the ropes, for it was to be a game to tell about, even for the professionals.

Apart from the life-risk, the stakes were enormous; and the opponents were rivals at the top of the craft, as well as long-sought enemies.

"Each man has a hundred white," the Marquis announced quaintly, "representing his property, and one black—for his life. The black may be ransomed for fifty whites; to play it is optional; to lose it is to forfeit the life. Not to be more than five jack-pots, to win or lose all the whites—any left go to winner. Challenger to fix the amount of first pot, then alternate. Ready?" And he shuffled swiftly.

Wheeler put in five chips for the first pot, and his hand trembled pitifully.

"This is ghastly!" muttered Howard, white to his lips.

Soldano was devouring his aged hero with glittering eyes, numb to all about him.

With indecent haste the cards were dealt. Searing caught up and looked at his.

"I open," his lip curled. "Five chips."

He forced his hand to count them in steadily, and keenly watched his opponent. Wheeler had not picked up his hand. He was looking idly round the room with a gaze that seemed almost vacuous. Now he pushed five more chips into the central pile, and I fancied his hand was not so tremulous.

"Three cards," called Searing, discarding.

"I'll play these," Wheeler said, still without looking at his hand.

After looking at his draw, Searing bet five more.

Wheeler put in his five, then without a word pushed into the pot two piles of twenty-five chips each, raising Searing fifty, or half of the entire stakes! Somebody gasped; Searing's contemptuous smile vanished; he considered an instant, then threw his hand face down.

"I drop; there are my openers," he said sullenly.

Wheeler swept in his winnings, tossed back his hand, still without looking at it; and turned to rest an arm over his chair-back.

There was a long breath of relief round the room. At least the great man had not lost all of his nerve. It was plain who had the sympathy of the onlookers.

The next hand went so quickly that it was difficult to keep up with it.

Searing made a bid for popularity by starting the pot for twenty, and Wheeler's chips were in at almost the same instant.

This time Wheeler picked up his cards and dumfounded the audience by announcing:

"I open, for twenty. I hold three queens and this pot is mine!"

"Give me three cards," Searing smiled acutely and put in his second twenty chips. He was not to be scared out by a lie—not he.

"I'll play these three queens," said Wheeler, "and I'll bet twenty more on them."

"I want to see those queens." Searing set his jaw and put in his third twenty, at the same time becoming suddenly serious and intent.

Wheeler simply threw his hand down face up and drew in his winnings. Searing laid down aces up and stared at the three queens that had taken away two-thirds of his fortune. He had left only thirty white chips and the Black.

It was with an entirely changed expression that he took to studying the face of his opponent. I fancied I saw signs of an effort to hold the remnants of his self-control. If he allowed himself to realize for an instant that he was facing ruin, he was lost.

And the crowd, all at once realizing that Wheeler had in less than five minutes won two-thirds of the huge sum at stake, and increasingly swayed by the strange magnetism of the man, devoured him with eyes eager and superstitious. After all, old and feeble though this man was, he was the man who had never yet been handed the worst of it; and perhaps he didn't need any pity after all. Was he really less feeble, or was it fancy?

"Now, gentlemen!"

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Startlingly clear his voice rang out. On the instant he had the keen attention of every last one.

"There will be but this one hand," he went on incisively. "It will be worth watching; for you will see—just what you have the brains to see. Some of you may see only a hand of pure poker, with luck left out, and that means bluff. Some of you will see a test of a man's nerve. But some of you will see a man getting what is coming to him, and showing up for what he is! Perhaps you would call it an act of poetic justice. Keep your eyes open!"

As he finished his curt speech he put one white chip in the pot and picked up his cards.

SEARING had been listening, in vain trying to conceal a growing apprehension. As he followed Wheeler's lead and put in his white chip, he put down his cards to stare at Wheeler's hands.

The famous gambler had laid aside his cards and was wiping the backs of his hands with his handkerchief. The snowy linen was streaked with black!

"He *is*—he's *acting!*" Howard was dislocating my shoulder with his unconscious grip as he hissed in my ear, "Look at those hands! And his eyes—what is he going to do?"

It was true. Searing's keen eyes had seen first that those hands no longer trembled, no longer showed dark hollows. They were the supple hands of the wizard—the smooth, sensitive, almost womanish hands of the great artist—the hands that had won a dozen fortunes, had sent a dozen souls winging skyward. The grace of their least movement was terrifying.

The buzz that went round the room showed that many had seen the transition. And the change was not limited to Wheeler's hands. The feeble old man was growing younger before our eyes, becoming each instant sensibly more virile and compelling. Now he was ready; he sat up, for the first time facing Searing squarely, and picked up his cards.

Roused from his numb fascination, the Westerner shook himself together and looked at his own cards.

"I open for four." Any one could see he was jarred, off his guard for the moment, for his face showed that he held a strong hand. "And give me one card." He shot across the board a look of vindictive triumph.

Still Wheeler disregarded him; as he put in his four chips, he continued to address the audience that he now had well in hand:

"Gentlemen, I hold only a pair of tens and shall draw no cards. My opponent has the winning hand. *Now* listen!"

He raised a hand, and in the silence I could hear Howard's heavy breathing.

"Twenty-five!" Searing's voice and hand trembled with eagerness as he put in all his white chips. You could see he feared his opponent would drop out.

"I see the twenty-five." Wheeler counted the chips in with heart-breaking slowness, dropping them slowly in an even pile, "Twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five. Now, Searing——"

He paused; while we held our breaths he deliberately wiped the cunning make-up from his face. I was thinking that Radburn had helped him with that make-up, when my thoughts were scattered by the effect that followed.

No man who has not seen the face of Sled Wheeler can picture it. Even I, who was used to it, caught my breath in a gasp.

As the pale, powerful face flashed out, like a gleaming blade from its scabbard, the glinting green eyes shot their fire straight at Searing; and the Westerner paled from the shock of it.

Wheeler, though fifty of his white chips would call for Searing's black, drew his own black from the bottom of the pile. Poising it steadily on a crooked forefinger, while he held the other man with that dread, benumbing glare, with his thumb he flipped it spinning in the air. It dropped exactly on the pile of whites in the center of the table with a soft *click!*

"Searing," he repeated, low and menacing, while his merciless pale face seemed to start out as in a limelight, to glow from an inner flame, cold and fatal, "Searing, you hold a winning hand; but *you* can't *win!* You're not square enough. I have told you the truth. You know it, but you lack the nerve to stand square and back it. I stake my life on that!"

That green gaze, that no man could face unmoved, the whole force of Dan Wheeler's strange man-power, now struck Searing full in the face, and for the first time. He braced and stiffened to the shock.

After a moment of numb surprise, he

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set his jaws and reached for his black chip. Slowly he forced his reluctant hand to slide it toward the central pile.

It was half-way in toward the pool, when over Wheeler's face passed a flash of exultation. Searing gave a startled gasp,

"*No!*" he broke out hoarsely, clawing back the chip to safety. "It's a plant, a frame-up to croak me, I'm —— if I fall for it!"

He had started from his chair. Now he dropped back in sudden collapse, and tossed in his cards, face up.

"I drop!" he growled sullenly; and his chin fell on his chest.

"You see, gentlemen!"

Wheeler turned quietly to the rest of us, who stared and tried to realize the thing we had seen. Then, spreading his cards with a deft thumb-slip, he laid them beside Searing's on the table. Searing had held three jacks, and Wheeler a pair of tens! Wheeler explained,

"You see, he held the winning hand, as I told him. He knew it, but he didn't know it hard enough. He wasn't *square* enough to believe a man could tell the truth and risk his life! His yellow streak came out, and he lost. He got what was coming to him! Think it over."

AS HE rose easily and gracefully from his chair, no one wasted a glance on the collapsed figure staring dully at the ruins of its hopes and schemes.

The great Sled Wheeler was back, and never so great as now in the hour of his triumph. He was surrounded by a pushing crowd of admirers.

"Doctor, *please* introduce me!" Howard gave my arm an impatient shake. Although he was pale with excitement and his eyes burned with admiration, he could not break through a lifelong training in formalities.

No introduction was needed, for Wheeler made his way through extravagant congratulations, straight to us.

"Doctor, if you have been as lonesome as I have for the last week, you'll forgive me for playing it low down on you. Will you shake?"

Though I couldn't find anything to say as I took his hand, he seemed satisfied and turned to my companions who were gazing eagerly:

"You don't need to introduce me to your friends, Doctor. Everybody knows this big fellow, and I am proud to meet him."

Dan actually flushed a bit himself as he looked into the boyish face so red with delight, and read the tribute in Jeff Howard's loyal eyes; for Wheeler admired a clean, gentle man extravagantly, and was minutely familiar with Howard's record.

But I distinctly remember that I was more struck with his manner of addressing Soldano.

"This boy I know better than you, Doctor; and he knows enough about me."

He lowered his voice as he held out a hand, almost diffidently, and Soldano took it, beyond speech for the time.

The famous cracksman drew us aside, with an apology to the others, and his face was grim once more as he addressed the big football man:

"Howard, the tough part of the night is ahead of us yet. You will do a Christian act if you will come with me and these two boys for an hour or so. What do you say?"

"Certainly! More than glad to do anything I can."

"Then you fellows wait until I say a word to Daly."

When he had given his partner directions as to running the game, and the little man had started the wheel again, Wheeler took Searing's loaded hand-bag and said good night to the company. Then we went to the table where Searing still sat:

"Jim Searing, you and I still have a score to settle! In half an hour you will find me at your rooms!"

Searing nodded, following Wheeler with a scowl of dark hatred as he came to us, carrying the big winnings of the game.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DAUGHTER OF LOUISVILLE JACK

WE WENT with him in a carriage to Howe's lodgings. It could not have been far, for we rode not more than three minutes, and in the carriage Wheeler talked football news with Howard as if he had nothing more serious to think about. But Howe was impatiently pacing the sidewalk and could hardly wait until we got inside.

"So you beat him out, Dan?" he asked as he closed the door of his bachelor quarters.

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"Yes, but I am going to break him," said Wheeler ominously.

"When?"

"Now — in twenty minutes — at his rooms," Wheeler answered. "Wait, there's no time for argument. You don't know. No man but Jim Searing will ever know why I am bound to do it. But I am going to do it, and one reason is that he has talked too much."

Again his manner softened and he turned to Soldano.

"See here, boy; I have no time to argue with you, either. Searing had that wheel fixed so he could control the colors, and tomorrow you'll find your money in your name at the Lincoln National. I have a use for what's in this bag to-night and it's going with us. Now, Howe, I want you to give me a rub-down."

He was half stripped when he finished his speech. Howe got a box of cacao butter and went at him. While he lay stripped on the couch I made sure that his operation-wound was all right.

"I never saw anything heal better," I announced, as I fixed on the straps.

"Why shouldn't it?" Wheeler looked up at me with that ghost of a smile, "I was perfectly well — never even had appendicitis!"

It occurred to me fleetingly that he was still out of his head, and he saw it.

"Doctor, I hate to tell you, but the whole thing was a fake. I faked the pain, palmed the thermometer on Walsh, oh, I had the whole thing by heart! Got it out of your text-book on surgery, even to hardening the abdominal muscles on that side like this!" He demonstrated, and added seriously, "The hot-water bag was a great help!"

I looked at Howe. He nodded solemnly and went on with his kneading. Wheeler was watching us both with a boyish satisfaction.

"And this old Puritan can't lie for sour apples," he said. He looked from me to Howe. "So I had to play bug-house; so he could carry a true report to you, and so you could hand it on to Searing. For Searing's no fool—and he had to be fooled. If he had got wind of me on his trail, I never could have got at him to-night. But it's all right now!"

And with a sigh of comfort he turned over on his face.

I had no remark to fit the occasion. So I stood and watched Howe kneading the symmetrical muscles under his fine white skin.

"The trouble with you is," Howe spoke with conviction, "that you never know when to stop. Now you are going to Searing's rooms, where he will have a gang of thugs to beat you up and take your handbag. That will be the last you'll see of him, or of anything else, probably."

"That would be sad, wouldn't it?"

Wheeler jumped up and dressed with the speed of a quick-change artist, pressing us all into service. When we were ready to leave he warned Howe,

"Be sure to be ready for us with the launch at Fifty-second in less than an hour."

"I shall be there, all right. I wish I were as sure of you," Howe answered with prophetic gloom.

Wheeler motioned to us to follow, and we entered the carriage in silence. He gave the driver some whispered directions before he got in himself, and for a time no one spoke. Wheeler seemed to be thinking something over carefully.

"Now this is going to be no fun for you boys," he announced at length. "You, Soldano, are in for a bad time. But I want you to believe I have thought it all out and am doing the best I know how. I have an old score to settle, as I said, but there is more to it than that, and more than you will ever know. So don't forget—" he leaned forward impressively—"yours is a thinking part. I have laid all my plans well for this act; I have made no mistake. And *no matter what you see happening to me, keep out!* Don't butt in, even if you see me get croaked! Do you get it?"

We nodded. I suppose I was as white as the rest. I felt it. For Wheeler never talked to be talking.

"Now pardon me if I have brought you along to use you," he said to Howard. "These boys may be too much interested to keep their heads; and I want you to promise me on your honor to hold them down if they show signs of going up in the air; will you do it?"

"I certainly will," said Jeff promptly and simply.

"Then nobody will get his, but me."

He leaned back, satisfied, and said no more until the carriage stopped.

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IT WAS an old-fashioned house of brick, with a small square of green in front, that might have been on any one of several down-town side-streets. As Wheeler was opening the door with a latch-key he said,

"There is no one in the house now. Searing's rent runs out to-morrow; and to-morrow—who can tell what will happen? Walk in, gentlemen."

He stepped inside and without any fumbling or uncertainty turned on the hall light. We followed him up-stairs and with the same certainty he opened and lighted a large front room at the left of the stair-head, leaving the upper hall dim, half-lighted from below.

"He only used this room and the bedroom across the hall," said Wheeler. "You will be comfortable and out of sight in this curtained alcove at the back." He set in chairs for us and drew the curtains so we could see, unseen ourselves. Then he said briskly,

"Now make yourselves comfortable while I set the stage for my play."

Searing's bag, containing the money, he placed on a table-topped desk in the middle of the room. Next he searched all drawers and corners.

"No weapons," he announced. "I didn't know but he might have a 'gat' somewhere." After a final look round, "Now I am going to wait in the room across the hall. The curtain will go up to slow music in a minute."

"But so soon after your operation," I couldn't help calling out, "are you going to let Searing and a gang of yeggs——"

"Now, Doctor!" He raised a finger. "Remember the thermometer I palmed on you! And this is *my* game now."

He waved his hand to us and went out, leaving the room empty.

In the dark, I could just make out two white faces—Soldano's beside me, Howard's behind and between us.

"This is creepy," whispered the latter; "beats the last minute before the ball is put in play—hush-sh!—listen below!"

Some one was rattling a key in the lock of the street-door; there was a quick light step and a silken frou-frou mounting the stairs. In the doorway appeared the girl, Sue Jackson!

I heard Soldano's suppressed gasp of surprise, and I knew he had been thinking of her. No wonder he had lost his head.

Even in her gray traveling-dress she was a dangerously beautiful woman, with a brilliant and startling beauty that filled the room as with a delicate fragrance.

She swept a searching look round the room, half turned and called across the hall:

"Searing! Jim Searing!"

After listening an instant, she came swiftly in, opened the bag on the table and glanced at the contents. When she raised her face it wore a listening frown. She turned a slow look around the empty room once more, took one graceful step toward us, and a slight sound made her turn to the door.

Wheeler stood just inside, arms folded in Napoleonic pose, watching her steadily.

"Dan! Dan? Is it really you—alive?"

"Alive," he said grimly. "No thanks to you, or yours!"

"Then Searing—what have you done with Searing?"

Her face brightened eagerly, and it was more beautiful than ever. But Wheeler moved not a muscle.

"So far," he answered, "I have only taken his money, but wait!"

He stepped to the table, and she followed his every movement with—I could have sworn—admiration. He laid a hand on the bag.

"But here is the kale. What do you care where he is?"

"I don't; I never did care!" she protested quickly. "And Dan——"

"Of course you didn't. You only wanted the coin; and to use him to do me," he interrupted sardonically. "But did you think for a minute that he could hand me the hot end of it? Me—Dan Wheeler? You——"

"Dan, listen to me, *Dan!* You've got me wrong again, I swear it! I did want to see you. I did hate you once, but it wasn't on account of father. For I heard the rights of that. I knew he tried to kill you, to get all the stuff, and you beat him to it. That wasn't the reason. You—you didn't look at me, Dan!" Her voice was low and sweet, rising with passion as she went on, "I was young—I showed you I cared—and you—would—not look at me, Dan. Then I hated—*hated* you! When I found Searing had done you that dirty trick, and so hated and feared you, I offered to help

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him. But I am sorry now; do you believe me, Dan?"

When she had hissed her hate through her white teeth, she was glorious in a feline way. Now she was softened, her rich voice caressing. She moved a step nearer.

"I didn't know who the boy was, Dan. But when Searing wanted me to——"

"Never mind that now," Wheeler stopped her and she winced as from a blow. He went on coldly, "Between you, you framed up a complete job, and you would have ruined him, soul and body——"

"No, no! Dan, *hear* me out! It was that that changed me. When I found what Searing wanted, and how clean the boy was, I—it brought back things, Dan, and I swear I came here to-night to make Searing give back the money. There was something about the boy that reminded me——"

"Cut that out!" Again she shrank from him, but he went on relentlessly,

"I believe you don't want to see Searing again, and that you don't hate me."

"Ah, Dan Wheeler!" The caressing voice would have softened an image. "If you knew——"

"I do know," he went on evenly; "I know you were for Searing while he had the price; that you don't hate me since I glommed the stuff. Few women can hate above five figures; and trust the daughter of 'Louisville Jack' to be hot-foot on the trail of the coin!"

SHE drew back with an indrawn hiss. In an instant she flashed into wild fury.

"Fiend!"

With the gasping whisper she snatched from the neck of her dress a long slender blade. Springing on him she drove straight down at the base of the neck, holding the bright knife inverted sword-wise, a cunning, inside-the-collar-bone stroke.

Wheeler caught her wrist and with one smooth twist took the dagger, letting her slide from his other arm to the couch. At the same time he tossed the glittering thing on the table, saying quietly,

"That's more like—that is more in character!"

He seemed not to note that she looked first at her hands, then at the bright knife with wide horrified eyes; then put hands to her face and buried her face in the pillows with a low moan.

"I can see some sense in that move," he continued. "Now we know where we stand. If you had got that knife into my neck, you and Searing would have painted Paris a rich vermilion, wouldn't you, girl?"

"Oh, Dan, Dan!" she wailed, suddenly slipping to her knees before him. "I don't know what made me. You are the only man who can drive me wild, crazy! Dan, I swear to my God——"

"Here! That's the one thing I can't stand for!" He raised her, and at the gentle touch her face flashed with a pitiful hope. But he put her back on the couch, and she again buried her face. Then he went on,

"But don't think for an instant I am as easy as that! Did you think I was just an old fool, to be blinded by an old man's passion? Did you think I'd fall for that—a girl soft on a crook old enough to be her father? Not for a minute, girl, not for a minute! But that was a dainty little bit of acting. No wonder Searing got you to rope and tie the boy for him! Made *him* think he had your trusting heart, did you?"

"I didn't lie to him; not once!" She looked up with tearful appeal. "And I *did* come here to tell Searing it was off, to make him give back the boy's money; then I was going away. He is a boy to be proud of, Dan. Won't you believe I would do him no harm?—that as soon as I found out he was——"

"What I believe is no money in your pocket," he persisted in interrupting her. "He knows now; so we'll let it go at that. But don't ask me to believe you have no interest in that bunch of money. It isn't human, my girl. And look how you have followed it; you can see what it looks like!"

He looked at his watch. "Now then, I don't like to be impolite, but unless you want to see something unpleasant you'd better be going. I have an appointment here right now, and there may be an argument."

He was as cool as cool; but she was reading his face anxiously. Now she smiled a wise little smile.

"Dan Wheeler, I wish you knew me as well as I know you. You are going to have trouble. And Dan—" suddenly she leaned forward and clasped her hands—"don't let Jim Searing get his hands on you! He's a brute, a bigger and a stronger man; he'll *kill* you, Dan!"

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"Well, I pass!" Wheeler made a hopeless gesture. "It's the big bet a woman will fool you every time; but you have no answer at all! Jim Searing is coming here, and there are three reasons why I have got to break him—break him at his own game!"

"Don't try it, Dan, don't! Put him out with that Eastern strangle-hold—you can do it easily—but if he gets his hands on you——"

"No time to argue!" There was some one at the street door, and Wheeler took a step toward her, "You must get out of sight; I'll show you where. Come!" He beckoned imperiously.

"Don't make me go, Dan! I'm afraid; I *will not* go!"

"SO I'M just in time, eh?" Searing stood in the door, showing his teeth in his wolfish smile. "She won't go with you, after all! —— you, I've got you now!"

He took a step into the room and to one side. Two masked men sprang past him swift and silent. There was no sound but a low cry from the girl; and in a breath, Wheeler was roped to a chair, hands behind his back.

He had made no resistance, and he only watched the girl with a half-smile on his face.

"That'll do, men!" said Searing; "I'll attend to him now."

As the two yeggs vanished, and the street door closed, Searing came to smile down at Wheeler.

"The Great Sled Wheeler!" he drawled. "Fell for a skirt at last! Regular Delilah act, eh? And she wouldn't go with you after all? I swear you're not worth killing; just another old —— fool! You cut a sweet figure now—you and your *Secret Order! Pfooh!*" And he snapped his fingers in Wheeler's face.

At the last words I heard Soldano catch his breath, and the girl glanced quickly around the room. Even Searing seemed to feel something in the air. He looked round at the girl.

"Well, what's the matter? Has he got *you* Svengalied, too?" There was an animal tenderness in his heavy voice. Now he picked up and opened the bag on the table. "But here's a cure for anything, and there's enough for two. It's all here, girl, and with this old stiff out of the way it's us for the wide water and Gay Paree! Can't you see us?"

He snapped the bag shut and turned to Wheeler.

"But here's where you get off for good! I don't want to hear any more of that bluff about the——"

"Jim Searing, you are a bigger fool every day you live!" the girl broke in scornfully. "You thought you had only to crook a finger at me any time. You are one of the brutes who think any woman can be won with a club! Nine women may be like that, but I'm the tenth; and you make me sick, with your brute strength and wooden head! Now you break your own record! Why, you hulking idiot, do you suppose Dan Wheeler would walk into such a fool's trap with his eyes shut? You stand there and gibber at him, while he is thinking whether he will skin you alive or cut your heart out!"

Searing had changed color twice as she spoke. After a suspicious look at Wheeler who wore the same part of a smile, he turned to the girl:

"Never mind about him! But you got my number wrong, girl. You got me going good and plenty, honest, kid! All the time I've been crazy for you, but I thought—I was afraid I'd lose if I showed it. Come with me, kid, and I'll give you the time of your life!" he finished hoarsely.

"You boob!" she answered: "Turn around and take one good look at a *man!*"

Meanwhile Wheeler had slipped his cords easily. Now he stood up and shook himself tidy, pulled down his cuffs daintily.

"Don't worry about her having your number, Searing," said he. "And the next time you hire yeggs, don't get two of mine! Also, the next time you rent a house in New York, don't get one of mine. So far as the score between you and me is concerned, I'd be willing to call it off. When I can't keep a few moves ahead of you it will be time for me to step down—but you have talked too much with your mouth!"

"And do you believe me now, Dan?" the girl asked breathlessly.

"Certainly—you're a wonder! I believe you saw through my little game. If I must say it again—I believe you saw who was going to quit winner and—where the kale goes, you go!"

Her face quivered, her sweet mouth drew down. Then she simply lay prone on the

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couch again and cried softly, like a heart-broken child.

Searing looked down at her, his face working, and growled,

"Buck up, girl; come away from the old devil. You can't have any use for him. You can have all I got!"

There was no sound but her soft sobbing. Suddenly Searing flushed purple. "What's he done to you?" he rasped, and he turned on Wheeler the evil glare of a maniacal hatred. "You —— old —— ——, I'll break you in two with my hands!" His fingers were clutching rapidly.

With a quick gleam of cunning, he leaped like a panther to the door, locked it and pocketed the key, and turned on Wheeler, panting and making beast-noises in his throat.

I thought of the knife on the table, and would have sprung out; but Howard held me down with a grip of iron and whispered, "Remember!"

The same thought came to the girl, for she called low and shakily, "Dan—don't let him kill you! You're weak—the *knife!*"

She made a careful move toward the table.

"Stop! Let it be!" Wheeler checked her sharply.

Never swerving his cold, smiling gaze from the wild man, whom he seemed to hold motionless, he slipped his coat and cuffs, rolled his sleeves with deft lightning fingers. Then, standing light-poised, neck arched like a stallion's and green eyes flickering, he shook his muscles loose while he called low and eagerly,

"Now come, you beast, *come* to me! Here's where you get your *brand!*"

One more senseless attempt I made to get away from Howard, frenzied by the certainty that Wheeler, weakened by his wound, would straightway be killed before my eyes.

The next moment I was lost, forgetful of everything but the marvel of the thing that was happening before my eyes.

Searing, in blind fury of killing-hate, caught up the first object at hand—a heavy chair—swung it whistling overhead and sprang upon his man. Down it came with a swish!

Wheeler, standing near the table, stepped aside—chair and table were a wreck of splinters in a cloud of dust. The very room rocked to the echoing crash!

CHAPTER XIV

THE MEETING OF THE GLADIATORS

IN THE half-instant while Searing stood numbed by the shock, Wheeler whipped a smooth uppercut to his chin, without effort, but the big man's head jerked back, he reeled, rallied, came back in a whirlwind of swings and drives any one of which would have floored a ring-fighter. Fists and arms flirted viciously through the air!

But they met nothing else. Muscles easily relaxed but responsive with the speed of light, Wheeler anticipated each lashing stroke, timing each sympathetic move of body, legs and arms so exactly that every blow just missed its mark—so that blow and response seemed driven by one impulse. The smooth unconscious grace of him, as he stepped in, out, swayed, parried, blocked, ducked or sidestepped, fell into quick musical rhythm. But each bar of effort ended with a smooth-flashing uppercut that was heavier than the one before.

Three times this happened, and the third time Searing dropped heavily. Checked in his blind frenzy, with a gleam of intelligence in his bloodshot eyes as he picked himself up, he saw the knife in the litter on the floor. He pounced on it with a guttural cry, crouched and mouthed ape-like, sneaked round Wheeler in a half-circle to get between him and the windows. Then crept up slowly—bleeding lips snarling!

I had given an unconscious groan when Searing got the knife. But Wheeler only nodded once to himself, as if satisfied, and kicked aside some of the broken litter to clear the floor. Now he half crouched, worked his arms lightly and stood poised—steadily alert, a picture of balanced and explosive power.

Searing sprang and struck; Wheeler leaped lightly to meet him and their hands met with a soft smack! Hand to hand and hand to wrist Wheeler pressed the driving stroke aside. The keen knife passing his body, at one side, slightly wounded Searing's own thigh.

There followed a show of unearthly skill; while in that closet we panted and gripped one another, tensely unconscious of all but the swift shifting figures before our straining eyes.

With a loose but tenacious spring-steel

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grip on Searing's wrist, Wheeler was guiding the flashing drives to pass on every side of him—now right, left, short, wide, while betimes he helped the down-stroke bury itself in Searing's thighs with a soft *chuck!* Glittering, flashing, in glinting arcs the bright steel passed to this side and to that; and the bewildering circles seemed to pass through Wheeler's lithe shifting body as if it were a mist-wraith.

Still untouched, and each moment more gracefully agile, the strange man seemed to warm to his work and to delight in it! He was an artist at his fatal work, and a flitting view of his face showed it ecstatic—a dancing light in the deep green eyes—as he swayed and twirled in the mad death-waltz!

Howard's grip now had my arm numb to the elbow. I heard him moan, "Oh-h—pretty—pretty work!" as if the delight and the wonder of it hurt him.

Then abruptly the shuffling feet stopped. Searing tore his left from Wheeler's clinging right, clasped both hands about the knife-haft raised on high, and heaved up all his strength for one tremendous down-drive, deliberate and irresistible.

Wheeler shifted his grip to a peculiar double wrist-hold, and planted his feet wide, threw his body forward——

Down came the blade steadily, down at Wheeler's neck-base—I tried to close eyes that stared wide and dry—and no man could stop that needle-point. But halfway down the impossible happened. Wheeler's muscles tightened to chilled-steel, and the moving dagger stopped—fixed—in a fatal decisive deadlock!

NOW it was man against man. Motionless they strove, berserk fury against superhuman nerve-power, while the air and the floor vibrated to the strain of their throbbing thews.

But Searing's fire of hate had flamed its highest, his muscles already felt the deadly strain. And Wheeler's white glow of annihilating-power, the gleam in the deep-green eyes, grew steadily more fierce. His muscles swelled, stiffened and set; a shock passed through him from heel to hand, a lightning twisting throb, there was a dull rending *crack!* Searing dropped to his knees with a hoarse groan, one arm flopped to his side, limp and useless. His chalky lue-and-white face turned up toward Wheeler's, twisted in a tight grin of agony.

Bending over him, swelling and glowing with triumph, Wheeler held both hands and hilt in his steel grasp; then forced the keen point down against enfeebled resistance, slowly, very slowly, back and down to Searing's own heaving chest!

The blade pierced cloth and flesh. The cloth reddened while steadily and slowly Wheeler drew the figure "4," cutting through linen, skin and muscle until the sharp steel grated grisly on ribs and cartilage, while Searing chewed bloody froth and grimaced gargoyle-wise.

I had enough. With my face in my hands I waited, sore nerves aquiver, heard Howard's terrified gasp, "Look! What is he doing to him?"

Then I had to look.

Searing's eyes now stared up into Wheeler's, wide with horror. Wheeler, holding the knife-point just over the heart and piercing the skin, was waiting—waiting—silent and merciless! From the long, green eyes poured the power more cruel than steel at its brightest; and Searing was getting it all.

Then into the chalky face slowly crept the fear, not fear of pain or death, but fear of Man the Destroyer, fear of the mystery of Manhood, wild fear, primitive and soul-searching. The man was seeing himself utterly unmanned, seeing his manhood murdered before his very face, and in that face showed a condensed eternity of torment.

Three breaths, or three hours, of this everlasting strain, and from Searing's blue lips issued a low throbbing moan, the distant, tremulous wail of a tortured soul, rising and swelling steadily, ending in a bellowing sob of abandoned terror. His head flopped sidewise on his shoulder as if his neck were broken.

Wheeler flung him aside, and he lay on the floor, a bleeding and broken thing. One hand, outstretched beyond his head, still held the reddened knife; the other lay palm up, limp and dead! It was no sight for a man to look at.

On the couch the woman lay in a faint, spared the last of it. Wheeler gave her one look and stepped to the door which he opened without a key. In came the little Marquis, followed by a servant in native Japanese dress. What followed was more like an unreal dream than what had gone before.

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The servant was a middle-aged man, with a passionless Oriental face. He quickly dressed Searing's wounds, stopping once to allow the Marquis to examine the figure on the chest, then stepped back and stood like an image.

Meanwhile Wheeler had put on his coat, and was his gracefully well-groomed self even to the white carnation in his buttonhole. The Marquis had waited in motionless silence. Now he bowed low, saying in a subdued tone,

"Since it is finished, I am instructed to greet you as"—a word I could not hear —"and to report to you for orders."

FOR an instant, and I think for the first time, I saw surprise in Wheeler's face, and he flushed as he motioned the little man aside to say a few low words.

The Marquis saluted with respect, then bade Searing get up. He then took one of his hands—the limp one—the servant the other, and they led him from the room and down the stairs. That was my last view of Jim Searing, and I wish I could forget it. As he was led away, bowed and cringing, he looked up into first one and then the other impassive Oriental face, with the pleading hopeless eyes of a terrified child; and as he went he whimpered softly.

Right here let me tell the only other thing I ever heard of Jim Searing, and we shall dismiss him finally.

Some days later I went to see Soldano off on the boat for Havana. Alone with me on the deck he took his last chance to warn me,

"Corbin, remember you are not to mention certain matters for *seven years*. Then you'll be out of it, and free to tell, if you want to. In the meantime, remember Searing!" He looked over his shoulder.

"I'm not likely to forget," said I, and a cloud came over the sun. "But what use could they have for such a wreck?" I mused gloomily.

"Not in my line," he whispered, "but hear my guess, and then forget it. Suppose Japan, who covets the Philippines, wants to make a catspaw of Uncle Sam. As things are now in Cuba, it wouldn't take much to sic us on to wallop Spain."

"Take much? What——"

"Who can tell? But some dirty trick, such as only a fit subject for criminal suggestion could do, and such as would leave no trace—this is crazy business!" He straightened up and shook himself. "Forget it and watch the papers for a few months! There's the last 'All Ashore!' Good-by and good luck!"

I had almost forgotten when, a few weeks later, I read of the Maine disaster. Of course it is impossible. I merely relate what happened.

Moreover, though it is well outside the seven years, and I was expressly told I would be free to tell this story, even now I feel uneasy about letting out some things. I should advise nobody to pry further into the matter.

CHAPTER XV

AFTERWARD

"WHERE'S Searing? You didn't kill him, did you, Dan?"

Hands to her hair, woman-wise, the girl sat up and shook herself neat.

"No." He was looking at her, deeply absorbed, and spoke unconsciously. "He wasn't mine to kill."

"Why did you let him get that knife?" she shivered. "Why didn't you put him out with one of your jiu-jitsu tricks?"

"Because I had to break him. I could have killed him any time, for he was a blind beast, but I had to meet him at his own game and break him. I broke him!" he finished grimly.

As he drew himself up and squared his shoulders, he was a strikingly handsome man. His keen, regular features, in the repose of power, suggested something monumental and historic. It was hard to realize that his graceful and well-dressed body was not much above medium height. The woman was watching him as if storing up the memory.

"And the—boy—Dan? Do you believe now?"

"I was thinking of that; I guess I was wrong. I apologize, but that doesn't cover the ground, and I never was strong for words. Can I *do* anything? What are you going to do now? Do you know what has become of that husband of yours?"

"No. It doesn't matter." With head bowed, she looked up from under heavy brows, steadily. "I shall go back to the boards." But she showed no enthusiasm.

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"You will be a hit, all right. But in the meantime, you are welcome——"

He made a slight casual gesture toward the hand-bag.

"Don't I know that, Dan?" Her lips trembled as she smiled. "Don't be frightened, I am not going to turn on the sprinkler again!" She controlled her face and went on with unahamed tenderness, "Doesn't everybody know that Dan Wheeler's worst enemy has only to ask, to get his last nickel, and that his friends don't have to ask? And we are—friends—aren't we, Dan?"

"I—guess—you mean that," said he slowly, piercing the depths of her upturned eyes. Abruptly he held out his hand, "Do you?"

"Ah, don't I?" She rose eagerly and took the hand. "I've something to give me courage now, courage to go on living. And I'd like to see the man who would dare insult the friend of Sled Wheeler."

Her head drooped over his hand and he drew it away quickly.

"Sure you won't take something," he asked briskly, hand on the bag, "just to show there's no hard feeling?"

"No." She raised a face April-smiling. "You can see I have money." And she opened the purse at her belt. "But—yes—I will. Just to show I am willing to take it."

He had swiftly opened his bag and taken out a flat package.

"Only a five," she warned.

"And how many ciphers?"

"Not any," shaking her head slowly.

He slapped the package back impatiently, held out his hand again, "Good-by!"

She did not take the hand. Still slowly smiling as at a petulant child, she stepped close to him, took the carnation from his coat, and turned away. Walking with deliberate grace to the door, she turned back; holding the flower to her lips, she gave him one long look over it, said very softly, "Good-by, Dan!"

CHAPTER XVI

"AS LONG AS DAN WHEELER LIVES, HE *LIVES!*"

"ALL OVER, boys!" Wheeler called; and as we filed out awkwardly he had eyes only for Soldano in his trouble. Soldano was like one wakened from a dream, but the light of admiration in his face as he gripped Wheeler's hand, and his first brave words, showed he had taken up his life where Cupid had interrupted. He answered the great cracksman's unspoken question,

"Yes, I'm all here; and it's a great world. I didn't know I had so many friends. And you are surely the lucky man!"

Howard was puzzled and, out of courtesy, Wheeler included him in his look as he slightly blushed and answered,

"Yes, it means a big thing to me, and still bigger chances. I wish I could tell you boys about it; but it has got to stay a mystery and we'd better forget it."

Providence surely sent Howard to us that night. He showed toward Soldano a tactful tenderness that came straight from his big brave heart. We all went together to Soldano's rooms, where he found a letter waiting. It was from the *Star* editor, announcing that Soldano had got his job as war correspondent at Havana. Howard and Soldano got instantly absorbed in the Cuban situation, and the big fellow invited himself to spend the night. So Wheeler and I left them, our minds at ease.

There were many things to be explained, and on the way back to Fifty-second Street I fired questions at Wheeler while he was openly expansive from his triumph. Howe was waiting with the launch, and he joined the happy "Talk-fest" as he called it. We took Wheeler up through the women's side, so he could be formally discharged in the morning.

When we got up to the hospital we found Lawson asleep, and we had the little office to ourselves—the little office where the story opens. We were too excited to go to bed for the few hours left before daylight, so we smoked and talked until sunrise.

HOWE and Wheeler took turns in explaining the happenings of the past five days and, barring the matter of the secret brotherhood, all was made clear to me. On that one subject, even in their communicative mood, they were absolutely silent. To this day I am uncertain as to the reality of the thing. Long ago I ceased to puzzle over it, as Soldano advised. I repeat, I believe it is no safe matter to meddle with.

But it was evident that Wheeler had

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more than one reason for "landing," or "breaking" Searing. The Westerner had not only circulated lies about him, but he had formed the plot or "frame-up" that had resulted, eventually, in Wheeler's imprisonment among the low criminals. Wheeler could have beaten the case in court; but to do so would have been to expose some of the secrets of the order, as well as to incriminate others. So he had taken his bitter dose.

An old friend of the Deputy Warden, as well as of many other men of influence and wealth, it was easy for him to run things in the Pen. Hospital; and he had taken a liking to me as well as to my plans for cleaning the service. It was the campaign he had waged with me against the petty ring of grafters that had betrayed his whereabouts to his enemies, from whom until then it had been kept secret. He had been obliged to go on the table for an operation in order to hold the Westerner in New York for the Open Night, for Searing had taken alarm and planned to sail for France on the day before Wheeler's release. And Wheeler had chosen Howe to act as hospital-keeper for the last week, because of his well-known reputation for truthfulness and courage. He had even deceived Howe as to his mental and physical condition because, he told us, "You hard-shell Puritans can't lie for sour apples!" and it was necessary for the frightened Searing to believe that the great "Sled Wheeler" was down and out.

There is no doubt that Searing had not only wronged Wheeler, but that he had in some way offended the mystic order.

But it was not until I had Wheeler alone in his screened apartment, and had examined his wound to make sure he had not been injured by the strains of the night, that I heard the last reason for his plot.

"It came out all right, as it happened; but it was a desperate scheme, and I don't see why it was necessary for you to suffer and take such chances. Why couldn't you have followed Searing after you got out?"

"I could. But to save the boy I had to get him to-night." In an instant he was the man who had held the knife-haft; even his voice was harsher. "You have learned a lot since you came here, Doctor, but you can't guess half the filth in that man Searing—in the frame-up he had doped out for the boy! I never thought for a minute that the woman would try to head him off. I knew the poison in the cuss; if I didn't get him to-night, the boy had better be dead!"

The terrible green eyes softened, glowed with a strange warmth; his voice was deep and vibrant.

"Doc, I may be a good many things, and I have run the whole string, but I can't stand off and see *my own boy* get the worst of it! I'd go on the table again, and without the ether, to stop it!" He was hoarse at the end.

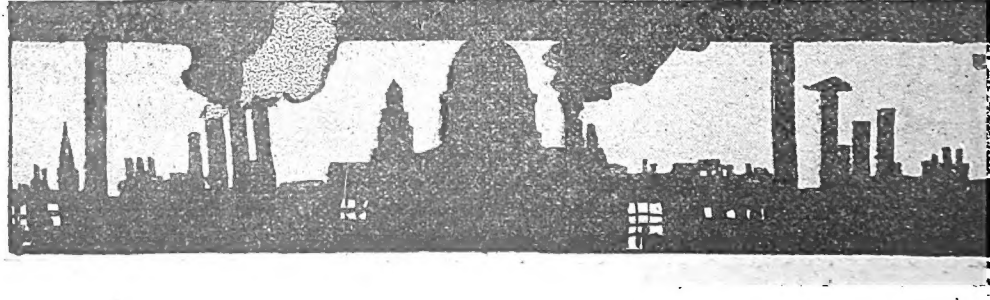
"Your boy, Dan?" I repeated huskily.

"And you hadn't guessed it? My name was Soldano once; and his mother never knew I was a crook! It was for the boy that I cut out the crooked work; and he has grown up *clean!*"

There was something wistful in the grim face that made me say,

"*Why* didn't you tell him, Dan? He thinks you—made the earth!"

"Not for your life!" The thin lips tightened and the cleft chin squared. "Some day he meets *the* girl. And she doesn't fancy a crook for a dad-in-law! Never! And one thing more—" he stood up and looked out at Manhattan, just graying with the morning light, and in his face came the light of life and youth— "I'm not ready to gum the head of my cane in a warm corner and tell lies to the kiddies, not yet! Just now I am where I never hoped to get, with a good shot at the game, and as long as Dan Wheeler lives, he *lives*, not simply exists!"



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